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The black hills

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# *The* BLACK *Hills*

AND THEIR INCREDIBLE CHARACTERS

*A Chronicle and a Guide*

*by*

ROBERT J. CASEY

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## THE BLACK HILLS

For

*"All the everybodies" (as of this date) —  
Donny and Karl Southworth, and  
Raymond Casey O'Brien*

# CHAPTER 1

## THE GHOST DANCE

---

BLACK HILLS—*A name applied at various times to different sections of country lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains, but now used only to indicate a mountainous region partly in northeastern Wyoming, but principally in South Dakota. . . . They are drained and nearly surrounded by the two main forks of the Cheyenne River.*—NEW INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

THEY say that on still summer nights, when the moon is full and the wind is from the east, you can see the dark shadows of Fred Evans' bull train plodding endlessly toward a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. The best spot for observing this phenomenon is probably the grave pit at Wounded Knee. But you have to look closely. The barely moving oxen and the swaying wagons, piled high with valuable trash for the Deadwood market, keep well down in the hollows. The ghostly drivers remember that it is bad medicine to be silhouetted against a sky line in plain view of ghostly Indians who are likely to be as restless as other people.

Whether or not the mystic bullwhackers wander the moonlit prairies as reported, filling the night with ambidextrous whip cracking and blistering conversation, it seems as if they ought to. And there should be no end of other interesting phantoms crowding them for room in the misty dry washes: General George Armstrong Custer looking eternally for his lost command; Scotty Philip, duplicating the legend of Babylon's Hanging Gardens because a lady wished for a herd of buffalo; Wovoka, the ghost dancer, and Sitting Bull, the slain; beaten warriors hurrying at General Nelson A. Miles's invitation to a rendezvous with a dim figure on a pale horse at a place called Wounded Knee; fortune hunters who died under the tomahawk of the betrayed Dakotas; hard-riding thieves one leap ahead of death; cattle rustlers, stage robbers, high-graders, claim jumpers, shotgun freighters, minstrels, coryphees, panders, gamblers,

comedians, harlots, ox whackers, prospectors, hard-rock men, mountain carvers, clergymen, poets, gravediggers, actors, morticians, bartenders, hay shakers, doctors, blues singers, assayers, buckskin tanners, editors, pill compilers, sheriffs, judges, chiropractors, trombone players, mule skinnners, cowboys, sawyers, monument makers, pony-express riders, dressmakers, wood choppers, engineers, pig tenders, historians, lawyers, dynamiters, hunters, trappers, tuck pointers, bookkeepers, painters, sculptors, scouts, troopers, cooks, murderers, milliners, con men, cutthroats, sharpshooters, filbert salesmen, sign painters, fortunetellers, goldsmiths and bird fanciers—a reasonably comprehensive list.

Before there were any ghosts worth mentioning in this region the Verendryes had come along the Missouri River looking for the Shining Mountains—Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye, and his two sons. With a grandiose gesture and hope for the best, they had buried a lead plate on the hill near where Fort Pierre was going to be, conveying the whole West River country, such as it was, to the custody of Louis XV, King of France, who never knew what he was getting. Verendrye was a thin and little-comprehended spirit before the amateur Indians dumped the tea in Boston harbor, before there was any West that anybody had ever heard about.

The trappers had come up the river to get a little rabbit skin to wrap some Paris bunting in. . . . Living a life of ghastly risk and hardship, exhibiting the same sort of dogged courage that finds recognition in marble tablets and iron statuary, enduring all that a bitter and treacherous wilderness had to offer them, fighting when they had to, against impossible odds, and dying without murmur—and all of this with the same spirit of adventure as peons digging yams at ten centavos a day.

Lewis and Clark had come swinging along beyond the headwaters of the Big Muddy and over the Shining Mountains to the sea. New competitors in the fur business had joined the pageant of the river with the "fireboat that walks on the water," moving civilization, if you could call it that, into the valley of the Yellowstone. The eager traders had come laden with gifts for the natives—firewater for the chiefs who might one day turn out to know something about yellow metal, beads for the squaws, and blankets for the bucks, and sure-shot smallpox for everybody. Westward the course of empire . . .

So presently there had been an overplus of ghosts of the Mandan Indians, the pleasant, handsome, upstanding aborigines of the Dakota country whom a few self-made anthropologists had classified as Welsh-

men—or was it Scots? There was never any proof of this classification. Welsh or Scotch, they were nearly all dead anyway.

The Sioux Nation, particularly the Teton family, whose mentor and chief was Little Crow, in 1862 had failed to exterminate all the settlers who had been carrying the torch of progress into the Minnesota valley. So, after a decisive, if extremely lucky, white victory, and the loss of thirty-eight of their number by hanging, the Tetons, too, had crossed the Big River to join the westward trek of people going nowhere.

Came, after a while, Mike Fink, toughest of the rivermen, to contrive a library of folklore like that of Paul Bunyan, who was also said to have passed that way. But Mike has no affiliation with the ghosts of the prairie. He makes his eerie trek farther downstream, somewhere below Chamberlain, because that's where he got killed by a little man who was quicker on the draw than he should have been.

After Arcady, the trading posts; and after the trading posts, the army.

Troopers had taken over Pierre Choteau's little stockade where the Bad River came out of deep mystery to join the Missouri. They had put a garrison in it to watch the Indians. A settlement had sprung up on the east bank of the Big Muddy peaceably minding its own business while Fort Pierre was trying to imitate Natchez Under the Hill at the other end of the ferry.

Steamboat men had reported that searchers for gold were rebounding from Pike's Peak and Nevada and ranging hopefully through Montana Territory.

There had been campfire gossip—merely that—about a range of mountains that lifted a barrier of blue-black peaks against the sky far to the west of the river. There had been fantastic yarns of a haunted region where the great god of the Indians dwelt in everlasting majesty and quietude. . . .

There had come an army of nosy little men to fret volubly over these mysteries. . . . Was there really a great white city of unbelievably beautiful towers and peaks out there in the indefinite lands of the Great Sioux Reservation? Why hadn't somebody talked with the Indians about this place? Were there really ridges of impassable mountains out beyond the white city? If there really were such mountains why should they not prove to be like the rocky uplifts of California, Idaho, Nevada and Colorado, vast treasure houses for the enrichment and improvement of mankind? Why didn't somebody look into this matter?

The point had seemed well taken as reports of it reached the Great

White Father, another detached manitou, in Washington. After a while, along about 1874, somebody had looked into the matter—General Custer, the same General Custer whose weary and befuddled wraith is undoubtedly wandering around over the tracks of his fine experiment in futility. He's probably still trying to figure out what went wrong.

Thar's gold in them thar hills—gold and cold and hunger and disappointment and sudden death. A hundred years ago this region was empty, silent, primitively beautiful and pleasant beyond the imaginings of man who had never set foot in it. Now somebody named William McKay or Horatio Ross has seen a little yellow color at the bottom of a pan and there is going to be a drastic and frightening change.

When the Sioux were pleading for their ghostly shrine, Paha-Sapa—the Black Hills—this had been a place of inviolate holiness, the home of the Great Spirit, whose rocky corridors and tree-roofed halls had never been profaned by a human's prying eyes. The shamans and medicine men who had gone there on great occasions to pray had entered the Manitou's precincts only at night, with their eyes closed, feeling their way slowly along a route made familiar by tradition. But Custer had come, and the god, who wanted none of the paleface with his forked tongue and his gifts for destruction, had gone away.

The white men, convinced of the sacredness of their mission and moving as to a new crusade, were tearing this lovely fane to pieces, and the cavalry was chasing them out and letting them come back, and the exasperated Sioux were ranging the outer slopes, also prepared to carry out some sacred mandates.

There were plenty of people all of a sudden on the once empty plains. The Dakota prairies, the valleys of the White River, the Niobrara, the Cheyenne and the Belle Fourche, were still in theory the Great Sioux Reservation. But everybody forgot that as soon as there was any reason to. And for a time the harried Indians were too discouraged to protest.

Tides of people were pouring across the West River country from Fort Pierre; other tides were coming up from the south, and a third flood from the southwest. They came on horseback, in wagons, in buggies, afoot, starry-eyed seekers after a fortune to be picked up off the ground, yearners for a future of comfort in the skimpy existence of a gold camp, the grand prize in a lottery paid to them on a free ticket.

And as thousands of them move out toward the magic mountains, thousands come back. The prairie has become the most populous area for its size in the world . . . Times Square on election night . . . State

and Madison streets at high noon. The path of the hegira is spreading out, wider and wider through the curly grass and sagebrush—wider and wider and harder and harder, as if a herd of buffalo had fashioned the track with a continuous stampede.

The stagecoach is in! It's loading at Fort Pierre. Get aboard for a quick trip to Golconda, the towns of gold and glamour, Rapid City, Deadwood, Custer and Lead! Only forty-eight hours, one hopes, to the Black Hills. Genuine Concord coaches with carefully selected horses and experienced drivers. Fastest, safest transportation in the Northwest!

It's snowing a little over Bad River, and the sky to the west is the color of slate. But the stage pulls out behind its six-horse team on its way to the Bad Lands—not snow, nor rain . . . nor gloom of night stays these couriers. . . .

It drives ahead, unconcernedly approaching the end of the storm and the end of the prairie and the end of its quickly diminishing days. So now, appropriately, it is another familiar shape in the weird procession moving on and on toward the Manitou's old Valhalla, world without end. With it journeys a special breed of old ghosts, passengers, drivers, station tenders, special police and Indian fighters. . . . Out on the horizon the guardsmen gallop along, no more ghostly now than they ever were. Next to the driver and sprawled on the top, the shotgun messengers lie tense and waiting for trouble. And in the dark shadows lurk the darker forms of the road agents who made a good living out of this beat and eventually succumbed to occupational hazard.

A brilliant and fascinating panorama, this, in spite of the dim pastels that pass for color in human recollection. It may be grandiose, absurd and impossible, now—something straight out of a Class B moving picture. But it has to be that way because it always was. There was never anything prosaic or commonplace about the stagecoach from the time Orange Salisbury started his first line northward out of Cheyenne. It isn't that history changes much with the years. It's just that different people come along to look at it.

The stagecoach was the symbol of adventure, discomfort, danger, speed, daring, battle, drama and glamour. It was the link between the known world and a fabulous land of gold and glory. It took its place in a literature that seems to be immortal. But it didn't last long. Like the Old West it helped to serve it was on its way out the moment it came into existence. The railroad with a tin teapot locomotive, officious *puff-puff* and lordly whistle was presently yapping at its heels.



The pageant goes on:

"Fill 'er up, and check the oil and water!"

"Where can I get a taxicab to White River?"

"Two on the noon plane to Cheyenne with stopovers in the Black Hills. . . ."

It is too early yet to look for any new faces and styles in the spectral group that files through memory and into legend along with Evans' bullwhackers. Time at the moment seems to be standing still like the shadow of a sundial in the dark.

The old-time characters aren't showing up either. There aren't any men in buckskins turning grim eyes westward out of Fort Pierre. There aren't any men on horseback riding up from Fort Laramie. In Custer's old cavalry, no longer a familiar sight in this region, there aren't any horses. You don't see Indians in war paint. You don't see any outfitting shops filled with kerosene, shovels, pans, chains, saddles, blankets, bacon and beans. You miss the long-haired lads riding out onto the trail with guns across their pommels.

Vast acreages of cultivated land stretch out to the West River horizons. Little prairie towns, dusty but currently prosperous, have sprung up around the spots where the stage relays were. There are schools on the hilltops in place of lookout posts. You can get an ice-cream soda at any crossroads store.

You still have to travel long, seemingly empty miles to get from one place to another in this land of magnificent elbowroom. But thoughts of mayhem and massacre no longer concern you much as you set out. If somebody took a potshot at you from ambush, you would probably be surprised.

It isn't so long since a West River rancher was lynched for excess economy and odd ideas about capital and labor. It was his system, somebody discovered, to hire a hand for a yearly wage, payable in a lump every first of December and kill him when he came around to collect. There may still be ranchers who take a dim view of ranch hands. But they don't murder them annually any more. The country is getting too crowded.

The romance of the Singing Cowboy cinemas is something else that you don't find hereabout—not that you ever did. This area which was once the threshold of an exciting land of riders, ropers and trigger faners has quit being too sentimental about cows. Cowboys in dungarees push their herds down to some corral along the railroad at Interior or Midland, stand around listening to Dick Tracy on the radio and thumb

a lift home in a jeep. And you may be permitted to wonder where the contrivers of horse opera ever got their ideas. . . .

Well, come to think about it, there was James "Scotty" Philip. He was a cattleman, and he didn't die till 1919. He will be a legend in western South Dakota for a long time to come. The king of Babylon who built the Hanging Gardens to appease the longing of his foreign wife for her native mountains is better known, but then his story is older.

Scotty Philip was married to an Oglala woman for whom he had a genuine and lasting affection. In return she loved him, made him a good wife and asked for nothing. They had been extremely happy for several years when he rode in from the range one day to find her distrait.

"I have been talking to my people," she said. "And they tell me that soon there won't be any buffalo anywhere in the land."

Scotty admitted that was true.

"Then," she said, "there is one thing you can do. You can raise buffalo, hundreds and hundreds of buffalo, so that when all the other buffalo are gone the people will still have a place where they can find food."

"And cows?" suggested Philip.

"Cows are cows," said his wife. "The people have always eaten buffalo."

"Don't worry about it any longer," said her husband. And he began raising buffalo for prairie hunters who would never hunt again. When he died he had the biggest herd of American bison in the world.

Of course, not many cattlemen at present are cultivating buffalo. The remnant of the Philip herd has been put out to pasture on the preserves of the Wind Cave Park Game Sanctuary or Custer State Park. You sense, as you ride along on Highway 14, that your cattleman isn't cultivating much of anything that he can't turn to money on a fair market. He has radio reports twice a day to tell him of trade conditions. He has enough of a bank account to hold his stock until he can get the right price for it. He isn't interested in gold mines except those he can see as he gazes over his own broad acres. This, you feel, isn't much like the West of an actor with a guitar and a cowboy hat, nor, on the other hand, much like the country that men like Corb Morse, Ed Stenger and Ike Humphreys knew.

While I was thinking of this one day two boys apparently about sixteen years old stepped out to the road to greet me with expectant thumbs. They were like any young hitchhikers you are likely to meet on a highway in summer. They showed the same improvisations in dress.

As I came abreast of them I noted the ropc-bound suitcase standing just off the pavement. But when they got aboard I was suddenly aware of something different. They were having trouble in arranging a pair of shovels and—but this was impossible—two shiny new gold pans.

"We're going to the Black Hills," said the elder of the two, starting on a conversation left over from 1876. "We're going to pan gold."

"Where?" I managed to gasp.

"We're going up Rapid Creek to a place near Pactola," the boy went on. "We were there last year and we took out quite a lot of dust. But this year we're going to look around. And if everything pans out we're going to put in a sluice box."

There didn't seem to be much use in listening to any more of this. Everybody has heard it repeated in song and story over and over. But there seemed to be a logical explanation.

"My uncle owns this claim," said the boy. "It isn't very hot but there's some gold in it. He has to put in a hundred dollars' assessment work on it anyway. So he hires us to do it and he gives us what we can take out. We can pan out maybe two dollars a day—lots of kids are working the creeks now that gold is thirty-five dollars an ounce. And it's a lot of fun in the gold fields. They're so much like they used to be."

"They always were," I said.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LOST WORLD

---

*BAD LANDS—An American term applied to regions of unconsolidated rocks that have been extensively eroded. . . . In these regions . . . storm waters erode the incoherent rock that is unprotected by vegetation, resulting in the formation of a labyrinthine series of valleys . . . fragments of the old plateau rise above this [base level] to form table mountains or “mesas.” . . . The best examples are found in the upper portion of the Missouri drainage basin, in the vicinity of the Black Hills.*

—NEW INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

THERE are times as you roll over the prairies out of Chamberlain-on-the-Missouri when the sun blazing into your eyes is your only comfort. It is still ahead of you, hot and unwavering—which is all that tells you you aren't traveling in circles. This quivering prairie endlessly repeating itself as the horizon recedes is really there. You wonder why you have come.

Tastes are unpredictable and hundreds of books and poems have been written in praise of the prairie. It has the wide perspective and something of the restless contour of the ocean and so is much favored by people who love the sea. Sometimes a rainy spring weaves carpets of wild flowers across its gentle valleys and strews its always-rising distances with greenery, and looking at it you feel like a discoverer in a fresh new world. In cycles of drought it is a flat dish of yellow, rimmed by a brassy sky. It looks like a desert with a desert's dust and oppressive atmosphere. In midsummer it is hot. Always it is as monotonous as despair.

One by one you pass through little towns strung like beads on a chain along the Milwaukee Railroad and named, presumably, by the man who labels the sleeping cars: Oacoma, Reliance, Lyman, Presho, Vivian, Murdo, Okaton, Stamford, Belvidere, Kadoka. At four-thirty in the

afternoon you are unlikely to be a competent critic of scene or atmosphere. The same town has been going past every ten miles since first you climbed to the top of the plateau west of the river. The same flatlands have been eternally ahead of you—the same black road hung fantastically between two horizons one of which you never leave and the other that you never reach. Heat, sun glare, distances with no focus, mirages, distorted perspective and the vast emptiness from one edge of the world to the other, by this time have put you in a state of trance. The familiar hypnosis of repetition is creeping over you with the usual suggestion that you have traded an old world for a new, that you are presently to behold a spectacle of incredible wonder—something, no doubt, like the Indian Rope Trick.

And then, all of a sudden, you do.

From Kadoka you proceed straight west on U. S. Alt. No. 16 past junction with U. S. 16 (at 7 miles), past dirt road to Cottonwood (at 19 miles), proceeding south (at 21 miles) through Bad Lands National Monument entrance (at 25 miles) to Cedar Pass (at 29 miles). The route, although you are probably too numb to notice it, is just as deadly as the map directions.

You are riding on a table top just the same as the table top you've been traversing for a hundred miles. There's a little mound of white stuff over to the right. You notice some square-cut washes here and there along the road. They seem to be flowing with milk. But they aren't big enough or impressive enough to change the landscape's dreary rhythm.

Then you turn suddenly between two low banks and emerge onto a natural balcony overlooking a dream world of fantastic beauty.

Ahead of you for miles that have no end or vanishing point you look out across the tremendous majesty of a city that man never built and can scarcely comprehend. Towers, pinnacles and minarets rise bewilderingly into the sunset. Their summits are covered with white gold; their bases, lost in contrasting shadow are wrapped with mauve and green and purple. The vista is as unbelievable as a fairy tale. Strange perspectives trick your sense of depth and space. These delicate spires and fluted parapets, elongated like reflections in a bent mirror, reach up to seeming heights beyond all common sense. The road through the pass dropping below you plumbs depths that no map maker ever saw.

At this point one may as well quit trying to tell about how the White River Bad Lands look. They are unlike anything that one has ever seen

before, beyond imagination and almost beyond experience. They are weirdly beautiful. They are bizarre and fascinating and terrible. And they are indescribable.

The world (such part of it as happened to be interested) discovered, and to some extent investigated, the Bad Lands long before the Black Hills were even an empty space on a map. The voyageurs in their eternal quest for peltry wandered westward from the Big River along the Cheyenne and White River basins fifty or sixty years before there was any United States on the American continent. In the face of impassable barriers these early visitors turned back and voiced their agreement with the Indians whose word for this strange area was Makoo Sitcha. The trappers, in exact translation, called the region "Mauvaises Terres" (literally "bad lands," but meaning, in their practical interpretation, "lands difficult for travel"). Well-watered mesas and lush bottom lands among the broken contours meant nothing to them. They weren't interested in agriculture.

Their reports, which continued to circulate along the Missouri for decades, despite some exploration by Dr. Joseph Leidy and others, probably discouraged adventurers who might otherwise have overrun the Black Hills long before 1874. Even after the stage lines had been operating between Fort Pierre and Rapid City long enough to etch the prairies with ruts that are visible in some spots today there was little public curiosity about the Bad Lands. Stockmen found out about the supply of grass and big ranches began to spread out along the White River. An occasional cowboy would come into Rapid to tell of the wonders he had seen. The natives discouraged his poetical narratives on the grounds that he was drunk.

It wasn't until the railroads came across the prairies from the river to the Hills that the country really heard of the Great Wall, Sheep Mountain and Vampire Peak. And it wasn't until Dr. Cleophas C. O'Harra, professor of geology and president of the South Dakota School of Mines in Rapid City, began his explorations there that science properly identified the region as a gateway to the world of a hundred million years ago. It was a startling world.

Professor O'Harra's reaction to the spectacle when he saw it the first time was the same as that of everybody else. He was a man who could appreciate beauty no matter how many million years it had been melting. He wrote:

The Great Wall, viewed from the White River Valley, presents a particularly rugged aspect and, like the great wall that it is, stretches for many miles in a nearly east-west direction, disclosing for much of the distance a continuous sky-line series of towers, pinnacles and precipitous gulches. Much of the view from Sheep Mountain, which projects five or six hundred feet above the lower valleys, is hopelessly indescribable.

Far away, the cattle may be seen feeding on levels of green, and here and there distant dots in ruffled squares indicate the new abodes of sturdy homesteaders. Immediately about, all is still. The sharp eye may detect a remnant of mountain sheep, once numerous in this locality, but quickly and quietly they steal to cover among the intricate recesses of the crumbling precipices. The song birds seem to respect the solitude. Only an occasional eagle screams out a word of curiosity or defiance as he sails majestically across the maze of projecting points and bottomless pits.

Magnificent ruins of a great silent city painted in delicate shades of cream and pink and buff and green!

Domes, towers, minarets and spires decorate gorgeous cathedrals and palaces and present dimensions little dreamed of by the architects of the ancients. At first there may come a feeling of the incongruous or grotesque, but studying more closely the meaning of every feature, the spirit of this marvelous handiwork of the Great Creator develops in vistas of beauty. . . .

Here on Sheep Mountain or on the higher points of the Great Wall the contemplative mind weaves its way into the long ago. There first come visions of Cretaceous time. A vast salt sea stretches as a broad band from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic regions and slowly deposits sediments that are destined to form the great Western plains of the continent. Strange reptiles sport along the shores of this sea, and myriads of beautiful shellfish live and die in its mud-laden rush-fringed bays.

Changes recur, the salt becomes less pronounced, the sea grows less deep, brackish conditions prevail, but the animals and plants, with many alterations and advancements, live on. Deep rumblings in the Northern Black Hills and in the Rocky Mountains, with accompanying porphyry intrusions, portend widespread changes. The shallowing sea slips away and freshwater marshlands and deltas prevail. . . . The Tertiary comes, and with the close of its first division the Bad Lands formations, as represented in the Black Hills region, begin to be deposited. Barriers somewhere are let down and a great horde of new animals of higher type appears. Here in the foreground streams push their way through reedy marshlands and vigorous forests and furnish a lazy playground for countless turtles and occasional crocodiles. In favored recesses groups of rhinoceroses may be seen, some heavy of bulk and water-loving, others graceful and preferring dry land.

Little fleet-footed ancestral horses, with names as long as their legs, nibble the grass on the hillside, or, spreading their three-toed feet, trot unhindered over the muddy flats, the nearest restraining rider being more than a million years away.

Here and there we see a group of predacious dogs and not infrequently do we get a glimpse of a ferocious, tigerlike cat. On the higher ridges, even far within hills and mountains, six-horned herbivora reveal their inquisitive pose and perhaps anon, like the antelope, show their puffs of white as they scamper from the nearing presence of a foe.

But the "reigning plutocrat" is the titanotheres. In great numbers we see his majestic form as he moves among his kin and crops at his leisure the coarse grasses of the lowlands. Here and there are beavers and gophers and squirrels busy with toil and play, and moles and swine and deer and tapirs and camels, and many other creatures too strange to mention without definition.

Because the Bad Lands as we now know them were so long unfrequented by man except in favored places, do not think the country was then a barren waste or place of solitude. To all these animals it was home. To them the sun shone, the showers came, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, and stately trees gave shade to the rollicking young. . . .

But "everlasting hills" have their day, and rivers do not flow on forever. These animals, under a Guiding Providence, developed traits as a result of their environment. . . . One by one, group by group, they died. A chosen few, tucked away by the kindly hand of nature, serving as unique monuments of the dawning time of the great mammalian races, are now being revealed as gently by nature again in these days of man.

The greater portion of the more interesting stretches of the Bad Lands are along the White River and Milwaukee Railroad from a point seven or eight miles west of Kadoka to Scenic, the station for Sheep Mountain. This totals about sixty-five miles over the routes available. There are occasional buttes and pipe-organ clusters as far south as Pine Ridge.

The eastern half of this area to the north of the river is what is generally known as the Great Wall. But as a matter of fact the entire district now embraced by the Bad Lands National Monument is a wall—the long mass of broken cliffs marking the northern edge of the White River basin. North and south traffic through the area was impossible to the voyageurs, the U. S. Army, the early settlers and the tourists until the past few years. Now a beautifully engineered road leads up from Cedar Pass through Big Foot Pass and the Pinnacles. The formations visible from the highway are magnificent and the easiest to reach of any in the basin. The initial view of the Bad Lands from Cedar Pass is a sight



without parallel in this world although it may possibly be duplicated in the next. But in the eyes of a great number of beholders Sheep Mountain still presents in one area more unbelievable structures, greater heights, more terrifying drops and more bewildering canyons than can be found anywhere else on the continent. It is in this area that Dr. O'Harra and his aides found the remains of the Mesoshippus, the pocket-size horse, and the saber-toothed tiger, and the vicious titanotherium and, more astoundingly, the camel.

There has been much conjecture about how the Indian tribes of North America could have migrated from Asia over a neck of land where now we find the Bering Straits. But it is interesting to learn that a long, long time before that migration the Bad Lands district, now swept by blizzards famous for their intensity all during the winter season, had sent camels to Asia over the same route. For here the scientists have found remains not only of the camel but of his remote ancestors. And it is from here—from the pillared canyon below Sheep Mountain—that the scientists have traced his progress toward the torrid zones of another continent, now his home. A climate changing too quickly for him to adapt himself to it then wiped him out and filed his bones to await the coming of the School of Mines paleontologists.

Reconstructions of the prehistoric animals that once roamed the marshy flats around Scenic and Interior can be seen in the School of Mines Museum in Rapid City. There are few finer fossil and mineral exhibits in the country. The actual presence of pieces of the dinosaur and the oreodon and the triceratops makes you realize that they were really living creatures instead of names or plaster statuary. You can actually put a hand on things a million years old. But, of course, it is impossible to reconstruct the intangibles of the Bad Lands region. You have to see it for yourself.

Nobody comes away from this unimaginable land unmoved. Perhaps no two people looking at it see the same thing. Certainly no one can ever describe what he has seen artfully enough to convey anything to anybody else.

Frank Lloyd Wright, probably, came closer to success in this irrepresible urge to catch a fleeting image with words. He described the seemingly jumbled and inchoate masses of the Bad Lands as a vast architecture.

"How is it," he inquired of a friend who was bringing him to the Hills, "how is it that we, toward the Atlantic, have heard so much of the Grand Canyon and so little of this, when this is so much more

miraculous?" And he wrote down his impressions to gain currency later as evidence of his own astonishment.

Of course I am an architect, and that ride through a land of pure line and evanescent color affected me strangely. Here was the element *Architecture* out of the body of the ground itself, begging human imagination, prostrating the simplicities of man before the great cosmic simplicity. . . .

Let sculptors come to the Bad Lands. Let painters come. But first of all let architects come. He who can should interpret this vast gift of nature in human habitation, so that Americans on their own continent may glimpse a newer and higher civilization, and touch and feel it as they live in it, and deserve to call it their own.

Yes, I say the aspects of the South Dakota Bad Lands have more spiritual quality to impart to the mind of America than anything else in it made by man's God. . . .

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MANITOU'S MOUNTAINS

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WEST RIVER COUNTRY—A *South Dakota term applied to the plains lying west of the Missouri. A typical agricultural area—in 1948 one of the outstanding ranch districts in the country.*

SO FAR as anyone knows except through hearsay, the Black Hills may never have existed before 1675. Even the Oglala Tetons considered them purely legendary before starting some improved legends of their own in 1775. After that the diaphanous mountains became more tangible, like the glass tor of the fairy tales or the snow-girt pinnacles of Shangri-La.

The Tetons, who called them Paha-Sapa (of which "Black Hills" is an exact translation) declared that they were haunted, holy ground, the tarrying place of warrior spirits and the inviolate sanctuary of the Great Manitou. Their status as a shrine was virtually conceded by the government of the United States by treaty with the Sioux. It is doubtful if any white man who signed the pact had anything but third-hand knowledge of the Manitou's abode, and within the possibilities that none of them really believed that the Hills had any form or cast any shadows outside the minds of the medicine men.

These are the oldest peaks on the American continent; as far I know, the oldest peaks in the world. Millions of years ago they were thrust up out of the salt sea that covered the region, taking thousands of feet of silt with them in their lift. This accounts for the great limestone plateau with its ragged heights and magnificent box canyons on the west slope and for the wreath of sea shells and other marine fossils about the lofty brow of Harney.

Thanks to their cap of sedimentary rock the mountains were much taller at the beginning—possibly twice as high. The years whittled them down to their present stature and the erosive process still goes on. The day will come, of course, when it will no longer be possible to pick sea shells on the top of Harney Peak, and the Borglum heads on Rushmore

will have been washed a grain at a time down to the Missouri which may have moved over into Wisconsin. It seems a matter hardly worth contemplation.

The actual history of the Black Hills begins with the report of Lieutenant G. K. Warren, U. S. A., who actually got into them, at least as far as Harney Peak, in 1857. They were explored by General George Armstrong Custer of lamented memory whose "attached miners," a singular adjunct to cavalry, found some gold in French Creek in 1874. The discovery was made official if not legal in 1875 by Professor Walter P. Jenney, acting as a government geologist.

After that thousands of people in direct violation of Federal mandate and the treaty with the Indians came raring into the mountains to get rich. At some of these people and their odd philosophies we may presently take a look. Most of them have gone, now, rich or poor. So have the Indians, and, so very likely, has the Manitou.

The Black Hills are neither "Hills" nor "Black." They are a range of mountains that look like mountains and are higher than anything on the American continent east of Denver. Whether or not they are an extension of the Rockies is something that the geologists may be permitted to argue about. But they are definitely mountains whose uplift from a flat plain gives them a grandeur beyond their height. They have a cover of pine that softens their coloring and deepens their shadows, sometimes to blue, sometimes to dark purple, but, except in silhouette as you see them on the western rim of the prairie, they are not black.

Geographically they consist chiefly of the southwest corner of South Dakota although they spill a little into Wyoming and stop just short of the southeast corner of Montana. The eastern gateway of the Hills at Rapid City is about 960 miles west and somewhat north of Chicago by way of Sioux Falls. The western gateway at Custer is about 375 miles almost straight north from Denver. Omaha lies 550 miles to the southeast, the Twin Cities 605 miles northeast. The Missouri River meanders from 150 to 200 miles to the west.

The region is served by three railroad systems, two bus companies and an air line, and at this writing is about six hours flying time from Chicago and the same distance from Los Angeles. Deadwood is in approximately the same latitude as Portland, Maine and Eugene, Oregon. A line drawn straight north through the axis of the Hills would pass near Regina, Saskatchewan, and extended straight south would reach the Mexican border somewhere in the Big Bend country of Texas.

If one may conclude anything from the tally of people who drive past electric eyes in western South Dakota, the Hills are easily the most popular mountains in the United States. If you reckon merely by the yardstick of sight-seeing attraction, only the Statue of Liberty was seen by more people last year than the Rushmore carvings, although the tourist season in the Black Hills is only three months and a half (June, July, August and two weeks of September) long. But despite all this, there are probably no mountains in the world more visited and less noticed.

The Hills for too many years, now, have been a sort of side show through which thousands of motorists drive at sixty miles an hour on their way to Yellowstone. . . . Breakfast at Rapid City, a quick look at the Great Stone Faces, a quick look at the Game Lodge or the Snake Pits or the Hill City Zoo, a quick look at Sylvan Lake, luncheon at Custer, dinner at Sheridan or maybe Cody, and a feeling of something attempted, something done.

Fortunately it is part of the charm of this region that you can spend just as much or just as little time on it as you want to and still get something out of the investment. For there is no mountain area anywhere that offers so great a variety of such interesting things in so small a space.

In the north there are volcanic uplifts that suggest corners of Switzerland. Around old Harney's weathered shoulders are the Needles, rocky spears that numerous surprised travelers have likened to the Dolomites. You can find mountain parks rising in a series of terraces near the Game Lodge in Custer State Park. You can look at herds of deer and antelope in their natural surroundings. You can range through canyons so deep and narrow that the sun never penetrates them. You can go fishing in gorges feathery with white water. You can make a quick tour from one end of the Hills to the other in a day, from Deadwood and Spearfish Canyon to Custer and Hot Springs and Wind Cave National Park. But you will still be running onto surprises whenever you turn a corner if you extend your visit for two or three months. And you will not exhaust the fabulous background of the region if you stay there for the rest of your life.

After all, it is the people who make the pleasant land—whatever it may be that makes the mighty ocean. The people hope and love and fight and hunger and freeze and starve and hate and die, and become part of the soil with which they struggled. And not only that. They

become also part of the atmosphere they once breathed—fragile folk in the Manitou's garden but certainly as real as he ever was.

When you talk of Custer City you are calling up the picture of a little grove of headstones. To walk along Whitewood Creek is to walk in somebody's footsteps. To say the name of Rapid is to arouse the echoes of a voice long silent. The people are with us—droll people who came out to shoot Indians, whack bulls and pan gold in 1876. And for better or for worse they probably will be here until the end of time. The Black Hills country would certainly be a different place without them.

## CHAPTER 4

### HANGMAN'S HILL

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RAPID CITY—*A modern City with broad streets, impressive public buildings, excellent hospital facilities, churches, schools, rail service, unusually fine shops and an alfalfa palace.*—RAILROAD FOLDER, 1920

THERE is nothing much to harm the most delicate sensibilities in the published history of Rapid City up to and including the second great gold rush—dated 1927. So far as can be gathered by the files of the press and manifestoes of the Board of Trade (later to become the Chamber of Commerce), it was inhabited by a special breed of people who were so virtuous that the local jails were maintained purely for the entertainment of visitors. Nobody in this snakeless Eden (Rapid City's fortunate altitude—3,198 feet—discourages reptiles) ever would think of disseminating scandal. Everybody, it is alleged, went to bed at 9:00 P.M., rose with the lark (the local lark is much esteemed for its characteristic song in D-major) and just went about doing others good. Some badly brought-up people might have thought that the place would be uninteresting, which goes to show how little badly brought-up people know about the simple pleasures of the totally virtuous.

Nobody ever got his name in the paper unless he was promoting a church social or making a speech in favor of sweetness and light before the Thursday Evening Gorgon Club. But one should not draw conclusions from such publicity or lack of it. In a town the size of Rapid City there must have been some activity aside from meetings of the Epworth League. In the field of what we may call "foreign" news the most interesting subjects had to do with "The Largest Potato Ever Grown in Conata," "How to Cultivate the Sea Anemone" and "Horseback Rides in the Black Hills."

Sometimes a politician in the heat of a campaign might mention in an interview the identity of his opponent and accuse him of conduct un-

becoming a Rapid Citizen or a grave robber. But that caused little stir, particularly if the opponent happened to be a Democrat. The worst anybody ever said for such conduct was that it might be called "ill advised." In Rapid City at the turn of the century, if you couldn't say something nice about a person you didn't say anything. And if you were careful about how you might be quoted, you didn't say anything anyhow. This was due no doubt to a thoroughly spontaneous kindness that motivated the entire community. Although it must be stated for the sake of accuracy that somehow everybody in town knew where all the bodies were buried.

Brother Harmon, the Iowa evangelist, once observed for the Des Moines newspapers that Rapid City maintained year in and year out the highest standard of goodness he had ever encountered. I gathered from this that many of the local institutions were like the emperor's old clothes, invisible to eyes of complete innocence. Lacking such equipment I counted seven saloons, three wheels and four faro layouts on the north side of Main Street between the Harney Hotel corner and the firehouse. There was a bar in the Harney and one operating independently across the alley. A saloon of sorts leaned up against the International Hotel where the Elks Building now stands. There were three basement spots in St. Joe Street—and there I tired of the inventory. Over on "Coney Island"—a bit of land isolated by the branching of Rapid River, was probably the densest concentration of honky-tonks in the Black Hills.

There was only one optician in town and he never seemed to be overworked. Somebody, I recall, sent an embroidered motto to the chief of police. It read: WHAT THE EYE DOES NOT SEE THE HEART DOES NOT LONG FOR.

The situation of Rapid City in 1910 is interesting not only as a study in civic self-deception but also as evidence that a town that can be one thing can just as well be something else. No disinterested observer in that period could have guessed that this community could ever be of interest to anybody but another hippopotamus.

There is nothing new in the sudden swing of a boom town from vice to virtue. The chief factor in it is the influx of respectable women into a man's private enterprise. Another is the tightening of the ready-money market that always follows the easy-come, easy-go philosophy. When the easy-come portion of the doctrine is proved fallacious the community requires a steady which it speedily gets. The women demand that some standards of decent conduct be maintained in the communities



where they have their homes. And it is history that they get what they ask for.

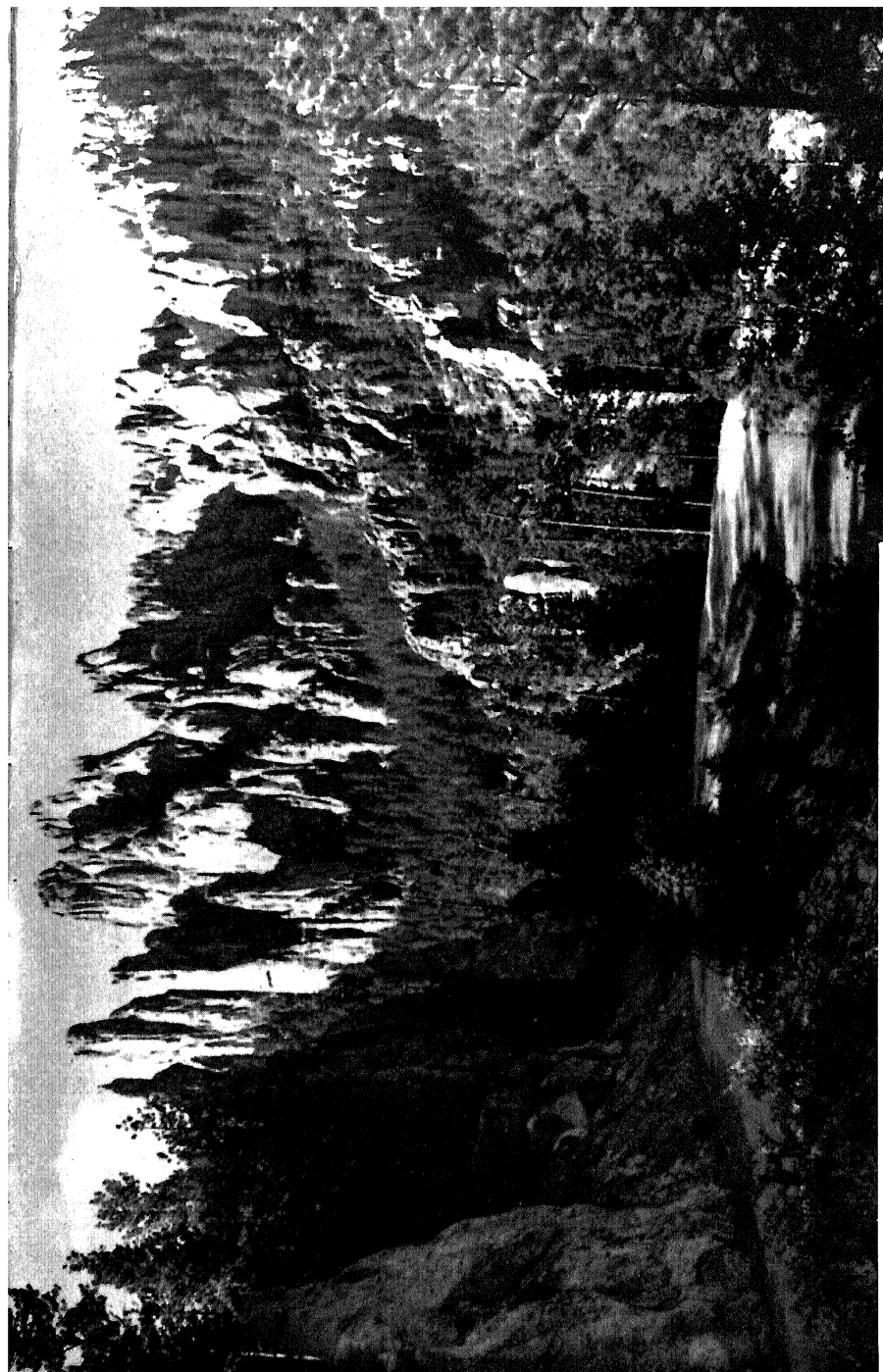
Rapid City proved unique among the Hills towns in that through hypnosis or black art the women were induced to believe everything and see nothing. . . . The ostrich, observes Bergen Evans in *The Natural History of Nonsense*, doesn't really stick his head in the sand. One gathers that maybe he only *pretends* to stick his head into the sand, that he knows what's going on around him but doesn't care to recognize it socially. About the only definite conclusion one can draw from this is that the ostrich was one of its kind that didn't live in Rapid that year. The ostrich certainly missed an amazing place.

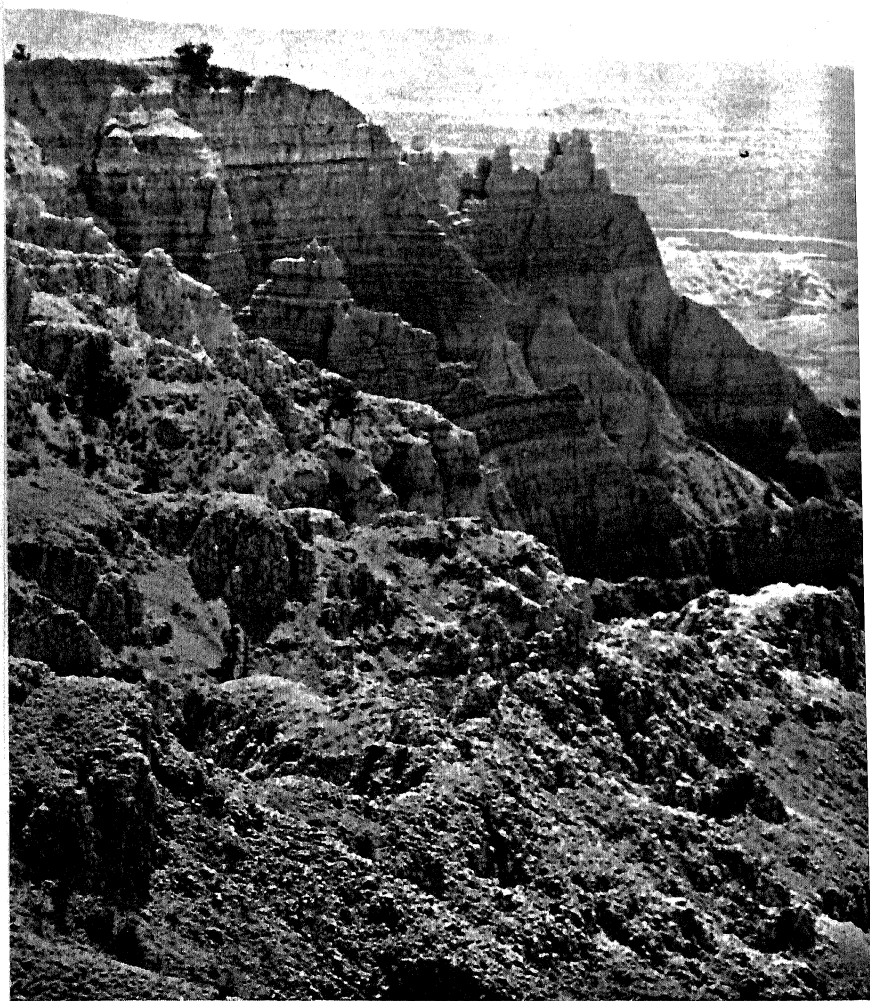
In spite of all the double talk which passed in this community for conversation the census showed a number of remarkable people: Jim Halley, John Brennan, Tom Sweeney, Professor C. C. O'Harra, Frank Lockhart, C. D. Crouch, Ed Stenger, I. M. Humphrey, Corbin Morse, Web Hill, Isaac Chase, Peter Duhamel, J. J. McNamara, P. B. McCarthy, Dr. Frederick W. Minty, Frank McMahon and Dr. R. J. Jackson, to name a few. There were also some clowns with talents worthy of a larger arena.

When I came to Rapid City to live, the town had already been in business for thirty-three years—quite a bit longer than I had. But you could still get yourself thoroughly disliked by discussing the affair that had given a name to Hangman's Hill. The hill at the town's west gate still carries its gruesome identification. The original gallows tree died or got whittled down and the municipality, rather than disappoint the public, put up another one in its place. Which shows how old wounds are healed by time, particularly if they belonged to some unidentified graybeard who moved out of the house before you moved in.

Hardly a man is now alive who knows or cares who got hanged or what for.

It took me about forty years to get a few names, dates and addresses having to do with the matter. And looking them over I have the disconcerting feeling that maybe I have been wasting my time. If the victims of the lynching had been twenty years old in 1877 and spared to us until now (1949) they'd be ninety-two years old—which seems spectacularly unlikely. In the end they would probably have been hanged somewhere else—to Fiddler's Tree in Sturgis, possibly, or alongside Lame Johnny. One might think that the matter would be well forgotten toward the end of the 1900's. But it wasn't—which shows, among other

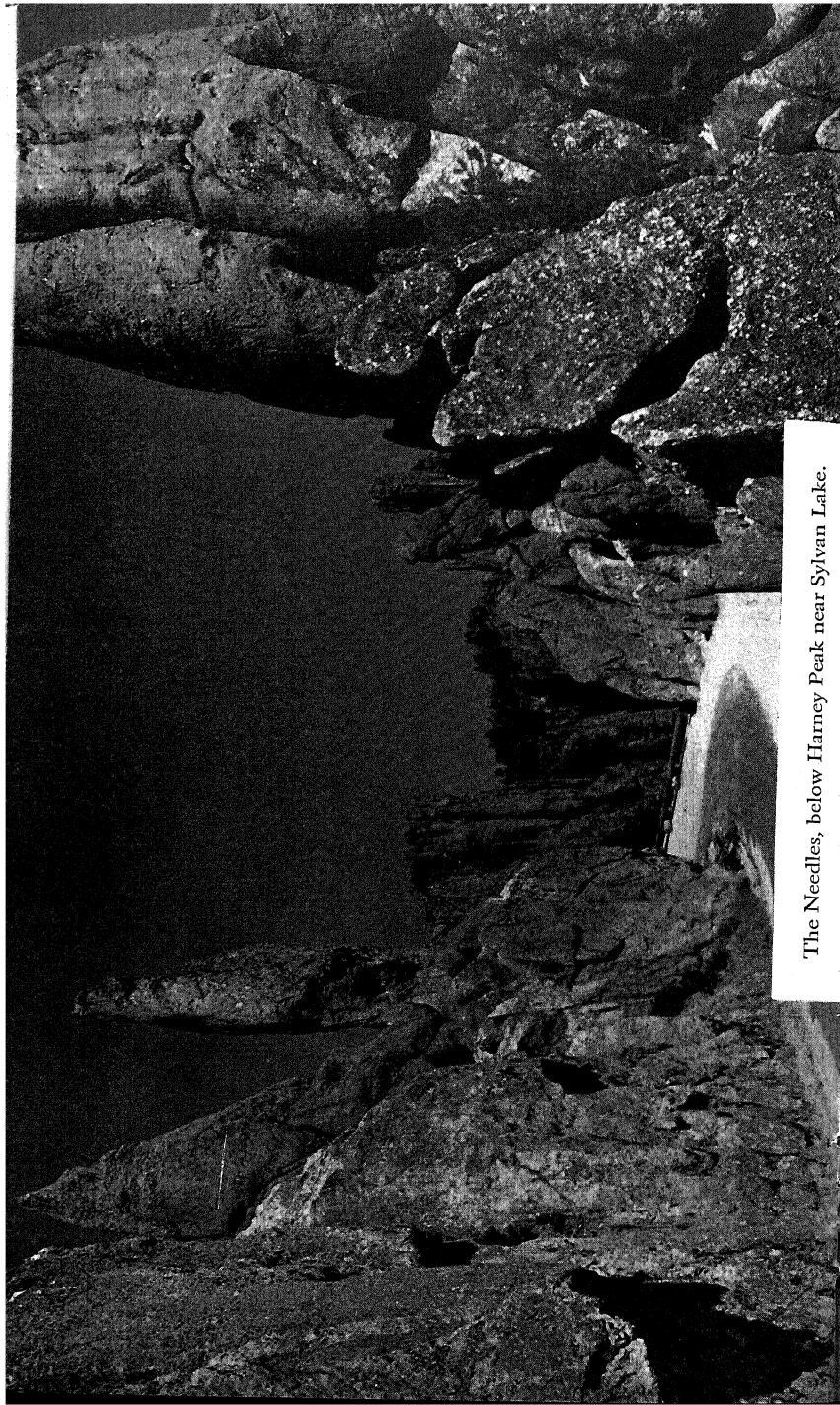




The Big Bad Lands, School of



Mines Canyon, Sheep Mountain.



The Needles, below Harney Peak near Sylvan Lake.

things, that conscience is harder to kill than a horse thief or, as the record shows, three horse thieves.

Despite the antiquity of my narrative, I shall give it to the waiting world merely because somebody, someday, may want to put up another Hangman's Tree on Hangman's Hill and tack a marker on it.

The victims of the lynching were Louis "Red" Curry, A. J. "Doc" Allen, and James "Kid" Hall, all strangers and presumed to be horse thieves.

This trio and a companion named Ed Powell, who got himself killed elsewhere and at a later date and takes no further part in the conversation, arrived in Rapid City on the afternoon of June 20 on the trail from Crook City. They camped in the shade of some trees on what is now Cowboy Hill and there they were observed by a timber cruiser named David Markel who thought they were Indians.

It is an interesting, if purposeless, exercise to try to figure out what might have happened if Markel had been better trained in identifying Indians. What actually happened was that he galloped off like another Paul Revere to warn the town of impending massacre. He came howling into Main Street arousing the populace to a fine pitch, and in no time at all Sheriff Frank Moulton was tearing back toward Cowboy Hill with a sizable posse all bent on killing somebody.

The posse coming over the brow of the hill stumbled over comrade Powell, or somebody they afterward thought was Powell. With a quick estimate of the situation he leaped aboard a horse and got away. Moulton had an easier victory with the other three. They were lying stretched out on the ground, asleep.

Six horses tied to near-by trees were recognized as stolen horses by Deputy Sheriff Harry Waite, who had an uncanny talent for recognizing stolen horses. He discussed this matter at the arraignment of Messrs. Curry, Allen and Hall, or so it was mentioned in the strictly conversational reports of the affair revealing that his magic was what everybody present identified as common sense. Any man was entitled to one horse, he said. But if he had a second one it sure as hell belonged to somebody else.

The posse took the men to a stage barn belonging to the Salisbury-Gilmer Company out on the east end of town, and locked them up. Kid Hall was angry and noisy and undiplomatic. He told the sheriff and four deputies face to face that they were "skates," "rubes" and "gazebos," and added that they had been born out of wedlock. . . . And

here is another intangible factor in the case. One wonders how much the Kid's studied effort to direct resentment against himself had to do with his subsequent trip to the hill. The posse, readily joining in the vocal brawl, seemed to have forgotten Allen and Curry.

Superintendent Ed Cook of the Salisbury line came into town on the afternoon stage from Deadwood. This was another unfortunate development for the suspects inasmuch as he could identify some of the horses seized on Cowboy Hill. He immediately claimed four of them as company property stolen from the stage barn in Crook City.

The three men were given a hearing that night. (According to some respected historians, this arraignment was conducted in the International Hotel, which hadn't yet been put up.) Robert Burleigh, justice of the peace, presided, heard a lot of evidence and held the defendants to the grand jury.

Inasmuch as these proceedings occurred in what was theoretically a justice's court, no written record was kept. And afterward there was some disagreement, particularly between "Judge" Burleigh and Henry Curry, who had come looking for his son's body, concerning what really went on. Burleigh declared that Allen and Curry had admitted stealing the horses but had exonerated Kid Hall of any crime except swearing at deputy sheriffs. According to this version, the Kid had been walking along the road from Crook City when they caught up with him and he had waved a hand at them and asked them for a lift. Maybe all this is the truth—which would make Kid Hall the first hitchhiker on record in the Black Hills, and one of the unluckiest of all time. On the other hand, maybe they weren't telling the truth—or maybe they had made no statement at all. By noon the next day most of the people who had been in the court weren't talking any.

At midnight a mob broke into the temporary jail and carried the prisoners off to the hill. Kid Hall died protesting his innocence. There isn't much doubt about this. He was in a screaming panic, and everybody in the vicinity heard him. To my knowledge some of the party remembered the incident vividly for at least thirty-four years.

In the morning ubiquitous Burleigh, the tireless public servant, took off the badge identifying him as justice of the peace and donned the insignia of coroner. He conducted an inquest in the presence of the bodies still suspended from Hangman's Tree. And the burden of his finding was that the knots were slovenly and that these men had been killed by strangulation instead of broken necks. Concerning the identity of the killers he apparently figured the less said the better.

The other Hills towns referred to the worthy citizens of Rapid as "the stranglers" for a long time after that. All you had to do to find out whether or not a man had been in the lynching party was to say "strangler" in front of him. The real stranglers would always run up a temperature and fill the air with alibis. But it really wasn't strangulation that worried any of them. The point of it was that the town had begun to suffer from an epidemic of conscience.

No matter how much they thought about it while trying to get to sleep at night they were never going to know the truth about Kid Hall. He may have been totally worthless as some apologists had attempted to prove. He certainly had had a wicked vocabulary. But these matters had little to do with the case. Had he really stolen any horses? That was what a lot of amateur executioners were anxious to find out. As for his character—well, the good citizens of Rapid hadn't hanged him just because he used a lot of bad words and got the sheriff mad. . . . Or had they?

Every now and then during the late 1900's when you started to talk with some pioneer about Rapid City's chances for the prosperity that seemed to be about due, he would look all around him like the third conspirator. And if nobody was looking at him he would whisper huskily: "This town won't get nowhere till all them that took part in the Hangman's Hill business is dead."

That got around, too. And like the silly death-suggestions of voodoo, it had its effect. For thirty years the community was stricken with a mass remorse which has just as definite a motivation as mass murder and lasts a lot longer. Maybe the last of the lynchers died in 1927—maybe not—but anyway it wasn't until that year that the curse was removed by Cal Coolidge, a visiting medicine man.

When it wasn't too conscious of its sins—the sins of 1877—or too bitterly critical of moral lapses—other people's—Rapid City was really a pleasant place. Except on Saturdays when the curbs were lined with cow ponies standing with their heads between their knees and reins draped over their necks, there was seldom anything in the streets. You could always find a comfortable chair under the iron awning of the Harney Hotel and join in the conversation of visiting cow pokes, miners, ham actors and land agents. You could go up the street and spin a dollar with Big Jack Clower. Or you could go up on Rockerville Hill and gaze out at the blue fringes of the mountains pasted against the



western sky. And you could sit there quietly conscious of the peace of God.

There wasn't much excitement at any time. The cowpunchers were numerous and noisy on Saturday nights. There were occasional fights that you had to see to believe inasmuch as they never got mentioned in print. But the weekly mayhem never was enough to justify an ambulance call and the mortality rate for years had been so low that the custodians of Western traditions were almost ashamed to talk about it.

Co-operating in the community policy of See-No-Evil, vice remained on its own side of the tracks. Cowboys on pleasure bent seldom got south of Main Street. And all the visible whoopee was conducted on so high a plane that the rougher elements of the Hills stayed away in disgust. The night jailer went home early, and the peace and security of the town were guarded by "Hooky Jack" Leary, "the constable who never had to make an arrest."

John Leary, before he became one of the most remarkable policemen in western Dakota, had been a hard-rock man in the Clara Belle Mine between Oreville and Sylvan Lake. He was given a high rating in his profession and might have gone on blasting ore till the end of his life. But one night he thawed out a stick of frozen dynamite over a hot stove. It thawed too soon.

When Leary got out of bed in Rapid City they fitted to the stumps of his arms the hooks that gave him his permanent nickname. One of his eyes was badly damaged. The other was a little crossed. But he got along all right. He went out and got himself elected "night policeman" by a vote that was almost unanimous. It turned out to be a lifetime job.

During all the years that he was the lone voice of law and order in what was still a frontier town he worked a nightly miracle. He never carried a firearm because he couldn't have done anything with it. He never was able to call on official help because the town budget didn't provide for such an extravagance on the night force. His only assistant was a nondescript terrier named Rags who was about fifteen years old when Hooky got him a place to sleep in the police station and thereafter outlived his usefulness. And Hooky Jack Leary had no trouble.

When he walked into Clower's or Pete Sweeney's or the Wheel to settle a row, he got order in a matter of seconds. The lads still wore guns for pleasure as well as business in that period and a homicide a week might not have been too much for Rapid City's share under the law of averages. The town had its shootings—some of the most grotesque affairs since Cain invented murder—but they didn't happen on

Hooky Jack's beat. Maybe the belligerent cow pokes and prospectors and nesters would eventually get around to a battle somewhere out on the prairie. But for years violence in Main Street was attended by one inviolable rule of conduct: You just don't annoy Hooky Jack because he can't annoy you.

All the regular visitors to Rapid City's skid row understood and appreciated the etiquette. Strangers learned or were quietly escorted out of town.

Once a collection of high-school boys celebrating a football victory picked up Constable Leary and suspended him by his hooks from a tree limb. But even that did nothing to lessen his prestige. A delegation from Ed Stenger's Ranch came into town unexpectedly the next night, seized the ringleaders and spanked their bare bottoms publicly in front of the Harney. After that the peace of Rapid went on and on and on to the point of monotony.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE NIGHT THE RIVER CAME UP

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RAPID CITY—*In a way the Union has been the means of doing many things to improve conditions in Rapid City and make it a better place in which to live. The fact that Rapid City went dry this year is due in a measure to the quiet, persistent efforts of the active and honorary members of this organization. The Union numbers thirty members. . . .*

—Report of MRS. JOSEPH B. GOSSAGE (A.G.),  
President of the Rapid City Women's  
Temperance Union, 1915

ONE of the more charming members of the Harney Social Club, which met informally on the sidewalk in front of the hotel, was Professor Gordon Severn whom I thought, for some unexplained reason, to be the head of the music department at the high school. Even after I had heard his performance on the piano I still believed in his scholastic rating: maybe he was better on the violin or had a couple of relatives on the board of education.

When we got better acquainted we used to play duets on the hotel piano which stood on the broad landing between the lobby and the second floor. He borrowed my music, which consisted of recent musical comedy scores and similar recent drool gathered up by my family in Chicago—"Glow, Little Glow Worm," "Every Little Moment," "You Are the Ideal of My Dreams," "I'm So Lonesome Tonight," "I Don't Like Your Family" and so on ad infinitum. He reciprocated by letting me borrow some things out of his repertoire—"A Boy's Best Friend Is His Mother," "Don't Be So Anxious To Run Down a Woman," "Hello Central, Give Me Heaven," "She's Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage" and "She Lives in a Mansion of Aching Hearts." He offered to let me try some others but I said those would do.

You must not get the idea that he was a complete dub, for he had

some definite talent. It was only that his gifts seemed to have bad timing and a confused outlet. He wasn't any Paderewski or Josef Hoffmann. He was probably a long way from understanding Beethoven or Brahms. And I didn't think much of his taste in ballads. But he had a mechanical skill that a pianola might have envied. He could play not only "The Cannon Ball" but "The Maple Leaf Rag," and those two pieces, I may tell you, were the mark of the accomplished pianist.

One of the features of our little concerts was the fact that they were generally matinees. The professor had to study or something at night. We would meet after luncheon and bang out a few items of the sort they used to call "Intermezzi." Just to refresh your memory the best-known of these was "Hiawatha." About two o'clock some of the waitresses would leave the dining room for a couple of hours off, and would join us at the head of the stairs in a sprightly rendition of "Silver Threads among the Gold."

Everybody liked our programs except the railroad men, particularly John Callaghan, a conductor on the Milwaukee. It wasn't that Callaghan and his friends were such competent critics. They were on night runs and selfishly wanted to sleep during the afternoons. The clerk came up once to discuss the matter but Professor Severn looked at him balefully and he dropped the matter. For a musician the professor seemed to carry a lot of workable prestige.

One afternoon he missed luncheon and he missed our concert. A bellboy brought up a note that he had a severe cold and was going to retire for a couple of days to his cabin up in Rapid Creek near Silver City. I was reading a book in the lobby that night when a woman stopped in front of me. I didn't recall that I had ever seen her before in my life but whoever she was she seemed to be mightily displeased.

I got up, as I had been taught to do, and saw a striking-looking woman magnificently incased in black velvet. She had a clear white complexion, a mass of black hair and soft, somewhat pathetic eyes. She was somewhere around thirty years old, I thought, and just missed being beautiful. I thought she was probably queen of Rapid City society, if there was such a thing.

"I'm looking for Gordy Severn," she said a little abruptly. The name didn't register with me.

"Gordy Severn," she repeated impatiently. "The box pounder—the professor."

"Oh," I said, "the professor. . . . Well, he's sick. He's up at Silver City or Pactola or some place. He has a bad cold."

"He's drunk!" declared this queenly woman, looking a bit more queenly. "He's drunk and he can't work, so he runs away."

"I'm very sorry," I said, wondering what I was sorry about. "Maybe he left some word with the manager and——"

"He didn't," snapped my lovely visitor. "I asked there first. He'll be gone for a week. And this time when he comes back I'm going to fire him." I looked at her in amazement.

"I know how busy you are," she went on more quietly. "Gordy told me all about how you have to practice eight hours every day, but if you could manage to play for me just an hour or two a night until I can hire somebody from Omaha it would be just marvelous."

"Well, of course," I said dizzily, "I'll have to see first what my schedule is—and then I can get word to you. . . . And what did you say the name was?" She stared at me as if I were something just hauled up out of a fishpond.

"I am Mrs. Miller," she said haughtily, "Mrs. Helen Miller. I can be reached at the Millionaires' Club opposite Coney Island."

I bowed and mumbled something or other as she strode out to the side door where a carriage was waiting for her. But anything I did or said was purely reflex action. For it suddenly occurred to me just who the professor was. He was the piano player in one of Rapid City's theoretically invisible dives. And as for Mrs. Miller, who had just offered me my big chance to be a professional musician, well, you probably wouldn't identify her by that name. Her *nom de guerre*, which everybody in town knew and nobody spoke south of Main Street, was "Black Nell."

Mrs. Miller never came to the hotel again during the time I lived there. But Dora DeFranne did and for familiar reasons. The professor recovered from his cold and returned to his old haunts, all except one. His patroness had meant what she said when she talked of getting rid of him. She didn't mind his getting drunk, he explained later. What bothered her was the fact that he had so little regard for his artistic career. Severn, not without regret, went over the brook and joined the staff of Dora DeFranne, another flower in Rapid's hidden garden. Dora lacked something of Mrs. Miller's elegance but she enjoyed a certain amount of silent popularity and she was likewise a good businesswoman.

Her investment wasn't quite so large as that of her chief competitor in the Millionaires' Club, or whatever she called it. But the DeFranne operation, with a dance hall and outbuildings, was big enough to hold a monopoly on Coney Island. It was difficult for a stranger to find out

about this, of course. He couldn't have made himself understood asking about the DeFranne, or Black Nell either, at the newspaper office or any of the local uplift societies. He had to ask the chief of police or walk down to the river and look at the place for himself.

Dora was a lot more noticeable in her searches for a missing piano player than Mrs. Miller had been. She gave voice not only in hotel lobbies but on the street, in restaurants, banks or saloons or other places where the scent happened to lead her. She spoke to anybody who might be in earshot and as for passers-by only the deaf ones could ignore her. But in all these proceedings I never heard anybody inquire out loud, "Who is that woman?"

The professor came no more to the afternoon concert programs in the hotel. Not that I said anything to him about it. Nobody in Rapid City could criticize me for meeting socially a musical *maquereau* when nobody in Rapid City would admit that he existed. The whole situation looked to me like something thought up by H. Rider Haggard.

I never had too much of a chance to forget about it. During the months I lived in the hotel I was forever meeting Severn or some of his playmates. It was his custom to get drunk periodically and when he was drunk Dora would come looking for him. I was left out of her canvass. If she knew that I had once played duets with the professor she never gave a sign. But when she came around you couldn't help being conscious of her. You couldn't ignore her any more than you could ignore a brass band. You couldn't! But Rapid City could.

There was no hint of climax when the professor stopped at my table one night drunk, maudlin and remorseful. He had been getting drunk more frequently through the winter. That he kept his job seemed proof that he was probably the greatest pianist since Franz Liszt. And as he drank himself blind it was his custom to get tearful about his misguided life.

"I can't go back to the island," he said very seriously. "Everybody else is there. But I can't go back." He didn't seem to be very sorry about it, which gave me the idea that the whole business was conversation. And anyway whether he went back to the island or not wasn't anything likely to produce any scareheads in the papers. That's what I thought.

I told him I hoped everything would turn out all right, had a couple of drinks sent in to him from the bar and then excused myself.

"And pretty soon you can't go back to the island either," he said as I got up.

"Why not?" I asked him, pushing my chair back into the table.

"Because I just talked to a guy at McGee's Mill on the telephone," he said. And I walked out thinking that somebody really ought to write a book about the funny conversations of drunks.

I went to the movie next to the hotel, the one where they had the electric piano that sounded like a file being rubbed over a washboard. And there I saw a Pathé Frères film (made in France) about a wealthy American cattleman who had a herd of three cows and one bull and lived in that part of the Great West where all the cow pokes live in châteaux. In complete fascination I sat through this offering to the last flickering foot where a lone horseman mounted on an English saddle fights off a troop of murderous Comanches attired in union suits. It was around midnight when I got back to Main Street and reality.

The reality was pretty foul. A rain was coming down from the north with half a gale behind it. Main Street was awash from sidewalk to sidewalk which, in those days before pavements and sewer enlargements, meant that the water was about a foot and a half deep. Thankful that I had only a short distance to go and wouldn't have to cross the street, I dived back through the rain to the Harney. The professor was sitting quietly in one of the leather chairs looking at a puddle of water that the wind had driven under the side door. His eyes gave me the impression that he had been asleep and certainly he looked more sober.

"Quite a night," he said with a silly laugh. "I'll call you if it gets worse. . . . Mustn't miss it."

"Sure," I said. And I went on upstairs to bed.

I woke up about one o'clock because the room was hot. And when I looked to see if it would be safe to open the window I saw that the rain had stopped. The street below still looked pretty wet and there were clouds scudding across the moon, but obviously the little tempest was over.

I next awakened two hours later to hear somebody pounding at the door. The professor was standing there and the night clerk with him.

"He insisted on coming up," said the clerk, "so I thought maybe I'd better come along."

"It's a great sight," declared Severn more coherently than I had expected. "The creek is up. And when I say up, I mean up." I noticed then that he was dripping water from head to foot. "The creek is up," he went on. "Both sides are up and the Coney Island bridge is out and everybody in town but me is out at Dora's place and what do you think about that?"

I looked at the clerk.

"It's the truth," he said. "He was trying to talk to McGee's Mill tonight but he couldn't make sense. So I talked and I heard about this cloudburst up the creek. So I told him and he went down to the island and it's mostly under water. . . ."

"And the people he's talking about?" I inquired. "What about them?"

The professor started to laugh. "Plenty!" he said.

"It's a very bad mess, I'm afraid," the clerk said. "There was some sort of special party and I guess everybody in town was invited—I was myself. And I know of about ten men who said they were going."

"What about the women?" I went on, and the professor laughed again.

"They're there too." He guffawed as the neighbors began to pound on the walls. "They're there, too. But they're on the wrong side of the river."

The clerk nodded. "It's going to be a bad day for Rapid City in the morning," he said, "and I'm going down there if they fire me for it. I'll wait till you get your clothes on. . . ."

So we sluiced on through the flowing streets and the knee-deep mud that clutched at you whenever you got off a sidewalk, and presently we came to the island or rather to the stretch of Rapid City littoral that faced the island. And we weren't alone. Standing as near to the bank as it was safe to get stood a long line of silent, motionless women—the grimmest phalanx I was to see ever again in nearly forty years.

The moon was out and fairly bright—bright enough to see every pale, determined face that wasn't veiled or in the shadow of half-submerged trees. And I stood looking at them with feelings that I have never since been able to sort out. The basic situation, of course, was about as comic as anything that had ever been thought up by a master of French farce. But only the professor seemed to see anything funny about its presentation and he shortly got tired and went back to the hotel.

These women, the wives and mothers of Rapid City, were personally beyond reproach. In the sort of a community they had fostered they wouldn't have dared be anything else, but that is beside the point. If good example meant anything, they should have made this town the cleanest and best since the Golden Age when there was no evil. But maybe the job had needed something more than good example.



Over across the roaring current, Dora's dance hall bulked large in the moonlight. The lights were on, dozens of them, making little quivering yellow patches on the black water. Somehow you felt that the lights were going to make things harder for the prodigal sons clustered there under the expensive art-glass globes. Here was not only wickedness but insolent wickedness. Where was the shame that should have stricken these creatures when the rising river had taken them in sin? Who of them could hope for forgiveness in this display of things that should be hidden from one's thoughts? You knew what these women were thinking. No one on earth knew better than they did how to keep hidden the things they didn't want to see.

It was interesting to note, however, that no amount of right thinking diminished the bulk or dimmed the illumination of the dive on the opposite bank. Whether or not the errant males of Rapid knew anything about shame and remorse, they were still in Dora's and shutting their eyes didn't put them safely back in their own homes. This was one situation that you couldn't improve by refusing to recognize it socially. And for better or for worse Rapid City would have to look at its future on a realistic basis.

So there the battle line was drawn by a swift rush of water—the beauty of the town on one side, the chivalry on the other. And here was the beauty where everybody could look at it. Beauty that no longer cared what the neighbors might think because all the neighbors were in the same pot. . . . Beauty that had quit thinking about such nonsense as vicarious disgrace in the fine thrill of getting the upper hand. There would be no argument or evasion about the charge in this case. There wouldn't be many excuses left in the dominant males when they finally came ashore.

You wouldn't have thought that a woman's anger could maintain its heat for two or three hours. But it did, as the river ceased to snarl and crept back into its banks. The unbroken silence, the fixed expressions of the waiting matrons, began to look like something frighteningly primitive—as indeed it was. There were nearly fifty women along the bank although probably no more than half that number were personally interested in the proceedings. And all of them carried weapons of some sort or other, including wooden rolling pins which I had believed to be the special property of uninspired cartoonists. The greater number of the amazons carried umbrellas which they kept tightly rolled. Nobody gave a thought to what implements Dora's men who came to dinner

might present in defense. It was too obvious that they were going to return to the mainland just as they were, without one plea.

The river began to fall quickly at 4:30 A.M. It was running about two feet of water at five, and about ten minutes later in cold gray daylight the first culprit, a fairly well-known doctor, stepped into the tide and began to struggle ashore. It wasn't the flood that had detained him but what he could see waiting for him on the opposite bank.

The women, for the first time in hours, suddenly stirred themselves. One of them moved grimly down to meet the inbound husband, and the others moved back to give her the position that was hers by right.

She was a little person and not exactly young and the man in front of her weighed probably a hundred and eighty pounds. But the right, or something, gave strength to her arm and she took a fencer's stance and jabbed her umbrella into his face with a hornet's speed. He dodged, slipped and fell back into the water while the crowd cheered like a lot of Roman vacationists.

The doctor had a bad time of it. The bank was steep and slippery and the current was still fast enough to tangle his feet. But Mrs. Doctor was on good ground and as lithe as a gazelle. And every time he started to haul himself up the slope she jabbed him again. She seemed ready and able to drown him if it hadn't been for a diversion created by a sudden rush of the remaining males. Other women got in her way, and the doctor in a quick move downstream was able to crawl out. He began to run through the mud toward town with the little woman behind him cracking him on the head with a smashed umbrella.

After that the battle had no coherence. What had happened to the doctor was virtually the experience of all of them except that one ill-advisedly raised his head to meet a rolling pin squarely between the eyes. He stayed in bed for many days. Through town like leaves before a wind the rest of the couples moved toward home—Punch and Judy shows endlessly repeated. . . .

The dancers wearied of the waltz,  
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl.  
And down the long and silent street,  
The dawn, with silver-sandalled feet,  
Crept like a frightened girl.\*

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\* Oscar Wilde, "The Harlot's House."

One of the odd results of this incredible performance was the realistic attitude of the little women who had taken part in it. So far as I know, not a single action for divorce was filed—and divorces weren't too difficult to get in South Dakota even on ordinary grounds. In a day or two all the crusading wives were back in circulation again looking quite happy. Their frivolous spouses, however, didn't smile very much from then on. And I can't recall that I ever heard any male in Rapid City so much as mention women's rights until along about 1920.

*THE LITTLE EOHIPPUS\**

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*RAPID CITY—The Gate City, in a hotel and a flour mill, boasts of two of the tallest buildings in the state. . . . Gateway to the Northwest's most diversified area. . . . Second city in South Dakota—2.2 per cent of state's population does 4.9 per cent of state's retail business. Rapid City's market is one-seventh of state's population—Wholesale firms serve 200-mile radius—Distributing center of territory west of Missouri River in South Dakota, also eastern Montana and Wyoming, and north-eastern Nebraska. . . .*

—CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PAMPHLET

It is a little difficult to classify Rapid City. What it was yesterday has little or nothing to do with what it is today. What it is today, fortunately, gives no basis for an estimate of what it is going to be tomorrow. Gutzon Borglum, carving his titanic head of Washington on Mount Rushmore, made the nose an inch too long to compensate for a hundred thousand years of erosion. The nose of an average Rapid Citizen doesn't keep its shape that long.

It is not usual to think of gold in connection with Rapid City except as it clinks in the cash registers of the souvenir shops, snake farms and "officially recommended" beaneries. It is not usual, that is, to think of Rapid as another Custer or Terraville or Deadwood or Keystone in the big free-for-all treasure hunt of 1876. But it was.

Gold made Rapid just as surely as it made Lead, the feudal eyrie of the Homestake Mine. Gold was what kept it alive through the oddly variegated years, although the gold came sometimes in such strange isotopes as baled hay or a citizens' exchange of credit for doing one

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\* "Said the little Eohippus, 'I am going to be a horse!'" From "Similar Cases" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

another's washing. When John R. Brennan laid out the present site of the town with a pocket compass on February 25, 1876, and began to build its first hotel he wasn't moved by any resonant sentiments about "Westward ho!" He was taking part in a pretty well identified gold rush with what means happened to be at hand. Gold, as somebody said who knew what he was talking about, is where you find it.

Brennan, Sam Scott, Thomas Conley, Charles Marshall and Frank Fields, after exploring the valley of Rapid Creek for twenty miles from the present Canyon Lake, selected a townsite in what seemed to be a fertile region well supplied with water. The founding fathers were sufficiently hopeful of making quick fortunes to walk hundreds of uncomfortable and dangerous miles across the prairies in the dead of winter, but they were also practical. The gold would come, of course. The Black Hills country was paved with gold, the back country was paved with it, and this new town, which one William Martin had named Rapid City, was the gateway to the Hills. The gold would come, vast quantities of it. But until it did the new community might just as well possess its soul in patience and make itself comfortable.

The gold was there, much as the prophets had foretold. No end of placer strikes were reported in Rapid Canyon. The tumbling creek ran from Mystic to Rapid through a succession of mining claims—some of them were producers. The McCurdy brothers, James and Archie, got a fair subsistence out of what they called their sandbank near Pactola. So did J. C. Sherman, who lived much of his life along the upper creek. So, even more appropriately, did a professional gold digger named Black Nell. To this day it is possible to pan out a showing of color almost anywhere in the canyon. But placer pockets have a way of petering out. And none of the expected quartz bonanzas was ever discovered. Rapid in the beginning had to depend on other assets, the most important of which was the fact that it was on a route between Sidney, Nebraska, and Deadwood thirty miles shorter and less mountainous than the one that ran through towns on the west slope.

Thus, during what you might call its formative years, Rapid City was a remount depot, a hay camp, on the Sidney-Black Hills stage line and was more or less active in this role until the coming of the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri River Railroad in 1886.

It had a brief recurrence of the gold fever during the late eighties with the discovery of gold-bearing quartz at Keystone and Rockerville and Hill City. The physical mark of the town's most ambitious effort

in this business is still to be seen, a squat round tower near the site of the old boot hill on the east end of the town. You may have to ask a lot of the present-day citizens before you find one who knows anything about its origins or significance, but it is not yet entirely forgotten. It is all that remains of the smokestack of a smelter and chlorination plant that lay strewn across the hilltop as recently as 1912. Ore was hauled to it by ox team from the mines in the southern Hills, and vicariously at least Rapid had become a thriving gold port. But the lodes gave out and the water gave out and the money gave out, and the buildings of the smelter slowly fell apart.

The loss of this fine opportunity, however, caused only meager regrets. By that time somebody had discovered here a fortunate relationship between quick railroad transportation and easy access to the West River cattle ranges. So, with no change of costume or equipment, Rapid City, virtually overnight, became a cow town.

It is as a cow town that Rapid is best remembered by those who watched its beginnings, a place of muddy or dusty streets, milling horses, noisy men and great hilarity. It had more character—or lack of it—in that incarnation than it has ever had since. Certainly it had more color and more drama. But in Rapid City life is long and art is fleeting. The ranges were broken up and hopeful nesters came in to test the dubious miracle of dry farming and tie up the grasslands in wire.

The cow ponies disappeared from Main Street. The wheels quit spinning and the faro dealers got jobs selling Ford Model Ts. Some of the mellow saloons closed up. A new class of people came to fill the sidewalks on Saturday evenings, men who wore striped overalls and floppy straw hats instead of hair pants and Stetsons, women in neat calico where previously, aside from residents, there had been no women at all. They seemed a little dazed by their changing fortunes, these people, but they were starry-eyed, eager and hopeful.

Tomorrow, they told the local populace, the old cow country between the Hills and the Missouri would be a vast sea of wheat. It required six acres to support one cow, they said convincingly, quoting the land agents. The same six acres might be expected to produce two hundred and forty bushels of wheat—or maybe three-hundred and sixty bushels—which, at sixty cents a bushel . . .

So Rapid City did what had to be done to establish itself as an agricultural supply and distribution center. In drought and flood, in depression and out, this job occupied most of the time of the community

until 1927 when Cal Coolidge and Gutzon Borglum uncovered a new pay lode, the tourists.

Rapid City shed another link with its heterogeneous past the other day when they pulled up the last of the Crouch line track and made a lunch wagon out of its prize passenger car. There have been loud protests about this, mostly from people who never bothered to support this odd railroad in what passed for its life. The indignant ones are by no means in the minority. So far as my recollection goes nobody did much for it since the day they laid the first tie.

For a number of years, now, the fun-loving visitors and most of the populace have—or had—been calling the Rapid City, Black Hills and Western Railway, “the scenic line—the road of a thousand curves and a hundred bridges.” And it was all of that. It ran across the mountains from the east slope almost to the west through one of the most remarkable natural passes in the country and over a piece of railroad engineering that was sheer phantasmagoria. It dived into Rapid Canyon at the very beginning of its quest and some say that it never came out. Except where the valley widens at Pactola there was hardly a spot in the entire trip where the tracks and the river were able to fit into the slot without crowding. The canyon by itself is one of the most beautiful in western South Dakota and the distorted perspectives from a swaying car seat made it seem twice as magnificent.

But when C. D. Crouch started to promote this roofless tunnel along about 1891 he probably wasn't much concerned with abstract beauty, and tourists were a breed whose true worth had not yet been realized—not in these parts. The road was known until the 1900's as the Dakota, Wyoming & Missouri River Railroad. When it had ten miles of track it was reorganized as the Dakota Pacific. Along about 1900 Crouch regained control and changed the name to the Missouri River and North Western. It was bought in 1917 by local businessmen who wanted it for a keepsake, and was given its final title. It operated regularly until the Interstate Commerce Commission permitted it to go out of business in 1948.

Everybody waxed sentimental at its passing. But very few of the people bemoaning the loss of a Class A tourist attraction seemed to have heard of what great things the promoters had envisioned for it. Rapid City, just being graduated from its position as a hay station, had actual visions of becoming a great railroad center, perhaps a prosperous tollgate like Minneapolis, perhaps a seething metropolis like Chicago.

Two railroads, the Burlington and the North Western, had come into the Hills by 1891, and wrangling over the location of the state capital gave promise of a third—the Milwaukee. It was an open secret in railroad circles that the Milwaukee intended to build a line to the Pacific Northwest, and Mr. Crouch thought he saw a great opportunity. The arrival of the Milwaukee would find him sitting on a practical pass through the mountains (how practical it is difficult to say) and leading toward some desirable coal fields in Wyoming. As a matter of fact he got his line finished only a year before the West River railroads were brought to Rapid.

The deal fell through when the Milwaukee decided to lay out its transcontinental route to the north. From that time on the Crouch line was merely a shuttle between the North Western and Milwaukee terminals at Rapid and the Burlington Black Hills division with a connection at Mystic. The tourists came to love it but the shippers didn't.

The tracks are gone; dry rot and fur-bearing termites had disintegrated the ties before the rails were removed. But legend will probably cling to the whip-cracking right of way for some time. Crouch was a great figure in his day, one of the ranking demigods of the gulch, and it is a pity that he never got his secondhand locomotive and refurbished coach to a suitable terminal in Portland or Seattle. His railroad may have been short but he had all the professional arrogance necessary to run a line for Vanderbilt.

Despite the hoorah of the Rapid City boosters, all was not sweetness and light in his drive through the canyon. One day a surveyor called him on a field telephone from somewhere near Hisega with a heart full of trouble. One James McGee, owner of a lumber mill in that region, had fired a shot across the bows of the transit man, denying the right of the railroad to go any farther.

"He doesn't like railroads," explained the surveyor.

Crouch blew a pistonhead. "That is insufferable impertinence," he roared. "You go back and tell him that if he kills you I will prosecute him to the full extent of the law!" It is a comment on what sort of man he was that the surveyor went back. One still finds it difficult to explain how the road got itself finished.

There will always be a delicate mystery about some I.O.U.'s that Rapid City refrained from issuing to support Mr. Crouch in his great work. About the time that the local syndicate was coming to the rescue of the road during the First World War, one D.I. Dinot of Chicago filed suit against the city to recover \$210,000 principal and interest on \$100,000



worth of Rapid City bonds dated 1890. The action projected a baffling whodunit and an unholy row.

After a while somebody found out about the bonds. In a moment of exuberance Rapid City had voted the bonds which had then been signed, sealed and delivered to the city clerk. Almost simultaneously the municipality was advised that the issue exceeded the town's assessed valuation and was therefore illegal. While the eager officials were wondering what to do about this, the city clerk's office burned down and the clerk disappeared—so did the bonds.

When Dinet began his suit, Dr. G. C. Redfield, one of the city commissioners, got some legal advice and found out that unless Rapid City could prove that the plaintiff had not bought the bonds in good faith, there was nothing to do but pay up the \$210,000. And Rapid didn't have \$210,000.

Detectives were hired to look into the antecedents of Mr. Dinet and from that point on the story gets fuzzier. It was reported that the plaintiff felt sure of himself because the burden of proof was on the city of Rapid and "the one man who could testify concerning how the bonds were obtained was C. D. Crouch who had left the country and was presumably dead." In which dark moment, somebody located Mr. Crouch in California.

"I shall be glad to testify against Dinet because he double-crossed me," the promoter announced cryptically. "I thank you for having given me this opportunity."

At the trial which was held in Deadwood in June 1918, Crouch declared that Dinet had given the city clerk \$300 for the illegal bonds with a covering bonfire. When he had concluded this revelation the court dismissed the action and Mr. Crouch went back to Los Angeles. Unfortunately he got away before he had a chance to tell how he knew all these things and what he meant by the statement that Dinet "had double-crossed" him.

Rapid City always has had interesting ideas, so much so that the town has been frequently accused of thinking beyond its means. John Brennan built a hotel which for its time was the largest and most modern in five hundred miles. On the comforting principle that the Lord would provide, a local syndicate, including Crouch, put up a smelter and chlorination plant when high-grade ore was hard to find. Rapid City salesmanship interested Eastern capital in the building of the flume

seventeen miles long from Sheridan to Rockerville. Rapid City also had a streetcar running in Main Street between the railroad station (then on the east end) and West Boulevard in 1888.

This enterprise consisted of one car and one horse, but it did pretty well until the railroad depot was put where it now is and the cowboys quit coming to town. The visiting horsemen used to rent it by the day and refuse passage to all townsfolk—who never rode on it anyway. The rails stayed in place long after the little car had fallen apart by the side of the road under Hangman's Hill. Their effectiveness as a menace to traffic when the surface got well covered with thin mud was one of the things that caused the paving of Main Street and the town's sudden rise to better things.

Save for the fact that the investment couldn't have amounted to much it is hard to believe that the Rapid City Traction Company ever showed a profit. But its meager income failed to deter other promoters with imagination. As far back as the late eighties some real-estate men, who at the time were probably selling their wares to one another, got the idea of platting a fine residence section out near the present site of Canyon Lake.

They had the modern idea that you can put a subdivision anywhere if you have fast transportation and enough potential buyers. So they started to put an electric trolley line from Sixth Street to the mouth of Rapid Canyon. They put an expensive grade across the meadow for a couple of miles and that ended the promotion. Crouch bought the grade for his railroad, and now the Lions' Club of Rapid City is proposing to use it for a highway. It may yet see service as a landing strip for rocket ships.

Rapid City, despite the malign influences of Hangman's Hill, assisted by drought, dry weather, bad crops, poor livestock prices, money panics and one thing or another, had quit being an eohippus and was beginning to look something like a horse before the First World War. The rise of the town as an agricultural distributing center and the disappearance of the big cattle outfits from the immediate neighborhood may have had something to do with it. The division of the great ranges into smaller ranch properties brought more and more people to town—all of them people living normally in a normal society.

The town was acquiring a unique character that enabled it to meet the tourist influx a few years later without turning a hair. From 1920

on it was a town whose streets were always crowded with people who didn't live there. The size of such a community is impossible to calculate so long as the census is based merely on the number of people who sleep regularly inside the city limits. The official figure in 1940 was 13,348. This was still being quoted on some of the highway maps as recently as 1946, which was, of course, absurd. The State Highway Commission's estimate for 1948 was somewhere around 18,000 but as applied merely to people housed within the municipality, not counting the sprawling subdivisions and additions and the more or less permanent population spreading up Rapid Canyon, the total was probably 4,000 short by the time it got set up in type.

There are, fortunately for the Chamber of Commerce, ways of arriving at a more impressive count. The Rapid City High School is housed in an impressive modern plant that you might think sufficient for the needs of a city twice the official size of Rapid. The town has well-equipped police, fire and public-health services. Hospital and medical facilities are better than you would expect to find in an average urban community of 50,000 inhabitants.

Rapid City's business activities, of course, put the town well up toward the top of the list in the state. The First National Bank of the Black Hills, Rapid City, is the third largest financial institution in South Dakota. Rapid's lumbering, meat-packing, flour-milling and cement-making activities have been out of the home-industry class for many years. Local distribution of machinery and farm implements, groceries, hardware and building supplies is on a scale that amounts to a West River monopoly. The War Department's designation of a north Rapid flat as a permanent base for B-29 bombers hasn't hurt the city's growth either. And as for the tourist business . . .

Not too long ago a committee of Deadwood businessmen, less euphemistically termed "saloonkeepers," called on a stubborn young state's attorney to ask co-operation in running a few roulette wheels and faro banks and chuck-a-luck and poker games during "The Days of '76" celebration, "just for the sake of atmosphere." He gave his visitors a sour look.

"The tourists expect to see the traditional Deadwood," said the spokesman of the group, "and gambling is certainly a part of that tradition. In addition to that it will bring in no end of outside money and be a fine stroke of business for the community."

"That's just the question," mentioned the state's attorney. "Will it? Leaving all moral considerations out of this matter—as we seem to have

done anyway—we must realize that while gambling undoubtedly will bring some money into the town, it will just as certainly drive other money out. If the voters of Deadwood wanted gambling in this town, we'd have it. We'd also have legalized prostitution—a commercial proposition with which we have experimented to some extent. But the reason you are coming to me about gambling is that the voters—the majority of the people who have to live in Deadwood—don't want it. They have been considering the matter just as long as you have, gentlemen, and I am inclined to believe that they have not been blind to opportunities for profit. But somehow, perhaps reluctantly, they have come to the conclusion that vice just naturally doesn't pay off."

It would seem that Rapid City anticipated the Deadwood state's attorney by some twenty-five years. One day, sometime before the next election after the river came up, somebody circulated a petition and in due course Dora's shacktown on the island and Black Nell's Millionaires' Club were sold for old lumber.

Dora seems to have dropped from sight. Nell, theoretically reformed, stayed in the public eye for more than a few years. She retired to Terry Lodge, up Rapid Canyon, and presently uncovered what was reputed to be one of the richest placer deposits ever found in the Black Hills. She hired Eddie Mitchell, a mining man, to work the claim and made enough money to keep her for the rest of her life in the comfort to which she had been accustomed.

She doesn't seem to have been entirely happy because one day she felt obliged to shoot Eddie Mitchell, and a sheriff took her back to Rapid on the Crouch line to face a possible charge of murder.

The case is remembered locally not so much on account of any dramatic developments but because the chief of police of Rapid was criticized for allowing her to sit on the jail steps and knit or wander over to Pete Sweeney's mellow saloon without a police escort. He replied with great indignation that despite the order of a judge committing her, he wouldn't put her in a cell until he had "looked up the law in the matter." After further procedure the sheriff locked her up and was preparing to stick the chief in a cage alongside her when Mitchell suddenly got up and walked out of the hospital. So far as I know, he's alive yet.

Black Nell died a few years ago in Deadwood. A woman who had attended her in her last hours told the story.

"I had a place near Mrs. Miller's up in the canyon," she said. "And I got to know her fairly well. She was a well-educated, pleasant woman

and still very good-looking. I knew all about her, of course. Everybody did. But I didn't consider it any of my business. . . ." (One may judge that the lady was an "old-timer" of considerable standing.)

"Her family had forgiven her before she died," she went on. "Miller wasn't her right name, of course. Like all those women she had enough self-respect to keep her family out of her business. She came of very fine people. And she thought it would be better if they didn't see her when she died. So I was the only one there. . . .

"She was thoughtful to the last. She sent her lodge pin back to her lodge and she gave her D.A.R. pin to another madam in Deadwood. . . ."

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## INFORMATION PIECE I

### *Sylvan Lake*

*Information appears to stew out of me naturally  
like the precious ottar of roses out of the otter.*

—MARK TWAIN

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ALONG in the nineties a pair of hunters, Dr. H. B. Jennings of Hot Springs and Joseph Spencer, a Chicago promoter, scaled Harney Peak and got the idea of putting a lake on top of it. Spencer bought a tract of land in Sunday Gulch, built a dam seventy-five feet high between two granitic boulders and worked a miracle. Springs and Sunday Creek produced a mountain tarn a mile and a quarter above sea level.

No statistics about Sylvan Lake are going to give any idea of its loveliness. In the middle of the Needles district, it is walled about with sheer cliffs, gigantic elephant's-foot rocks and tall porphyry lances. The forest, the tumbling land of Nod beyond the wall are never seen. The sky line has no distances.

Sylvan has neither the symmetry of crater lakes nor the sharply cut banks of glacial pools. Like them it is a jewel filled with light, but its setting is something unique. As a reflecting basin for its own oddly carved mountains, it never looks the same twice, and in a brilliant sunset its effects are kaleidoscopic. It is the most beautiful spot in the Hills and has few equals anywhere else.

The lake is on the summit of the ridge between Hill City and Custer on U.S. 85A and because of its elevation—6,250 feet—has a consistently comfortable summer climate. It is free from hot nights and well above the "insect zone." It is not too high to make breathing uncomfortable. The water, originating in mountain springs, is cold but not too cold to discourage some types of enthusiasts. Ninety per cent of the days are sunny and

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most of the nights are clear and windless. The night sky, like that of the deserts, is filled with stars only just out of reach.

No place in the Hills unless perhaps the Game Lodge is so close to so many points of interest. Joining with U.S. 85A at the lake is State Road 87, twenty-odd miles of the most astounding panorama a motorist is likely to see in this world. You have been wandering through a forest of pine and birch and quaking aspen and then suddenly you are twisting around spires and buttresses with the odd feeling that you have somehow driven your car onto the roof of a cathedral.

You ride along actually on the ridge of the world with the slope of the mountain dropping sheerly into purple space, and with the plains, displayed as you might expect Mars to look in the new Palomar telescope, hanging in a void perhaps a hundred miles away. You drop fully a thousand feet in the first few minutes in a series of dizzy hairpins conscious that you have come over one of the most talked-of bits of highway engineering in the country.

At the bottom of the slope you are close to the Game Lodge and its rosary of lakes and Mount Coolidge and Blue Bell Lodge and the high road to Wind Cave and Hot Springs. A turn to the left on U.S. 16 will bring you over the Iron Mountain Road to Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Keystone.

U.S. 85A drops from the lake to Custer with gentler curves and easier grades if less awesome scenery. Custer has plenty to offer in itself and is the gateway to the West. A swing northward over U.S. 16A, a newly graded highway, brings you once more to Hill City and the northern Hills. No spot in the Hills is much more than an hour from Sylvan Lake-Needles Junction. No spot is so easy to reach from so many places.

Sylvan Lake was privately operated for many years. A pleasant little hotel was set into the rocks at the end opposite where the Needles highway now passes. A road of sorts was cut into seven miles of hills to Custer and people actually came to visit the place. At first they came on horseback, then in light buggies but presently in three-seated busses. It was only natural then

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that one of the old Cheyenne-Deadwood stages should be put into the service. It remained the principal transportation to and from the resort until the coming of the automobile and the blasting of another road up the mountain from the Hill City side.

It is an interesting study of what highways have done for the Black Hills to consider the relative distances between Sylvan Lake and Rapid City in 1910 and 1949. In 1910 I was compelled to take an afternoon train to Buffalo Gap and stay all night in a hotel. On the second day the train which was supposed to take me out at 8:00 A.M. for Hot Springs had to wait for a connection with the train coming up from Omaha on the way to Rapid. We were two hours late getting started and so missed the C. B. & Q. connection for Minnekahta at Hot Springs. It was necessary to pass another night in a hotel. The C. B. & Q. shuttle had unexplained business that kept it from coming back to Hot Springs on the third day until way late in the afternoon. It rebounded immediately and got me to the Minnekahta Junction as quickly as possible. But that wasn't soon enough. The Chicago-Black Hills Express had gone on to Deadwood. I stayed that night sitting on a truck on a platform and caught a northbound freight at 11:00 A.M. on the fourth day. The Sylvan Lake bus naturally hadn't waited. I put in another night at a hotel. And at noon on the fifth day I got a chance to look at Sylvan Lake. The trip back to Rapid took only two days and a half. I had better luck with connections.

Today you can drive the distance easily and without stretching any speed limits in less than an hour.

In 1919 the state of South Dakota took over the lake and adjoining property and began to improve its approaches. For all its impromptu design the gradient from Custer didn't require much reconstruction. From Hill City, however, the cliffs were more abrupt. The problem involved in building the highway is still obvious as you come up about 1,280 feet in the last four

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miles. But once it was done, the usefulness of the automobile in this once isolated sector was no longer in doubt.

The little white hotel burned down in the middle thirties. With the aid of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, the state put up another on the mountaintop to the west, with Harold Spitznagel of Sioux Falls as architect. The work was completed during 1936-1937 and presented to the public as the most remarkable hotel in that section of the country. It is still that.

The building, a simple two-story, L-shaped structure of brown-stained wood and native rock, blends itself unobtrusively with the landscape. A high-beamed lounge finished in natural pine and cedar is on the left of the entrance. At the far end of it, and at right angles, is a spacious dining room decorated with Sioux figure paintings. Picture windows across the end wall look out over the lake toward the masses of Harney Peak.

The living rooms to the right of the lobby are bright and new with deep-piled carpets, ultramodern plumbing, expensive mattresses and bedsprings and practical lighting. The furniture is made of blond-finished hardwoods in a design whose modernity stops a long distance from angular discomfort. There is no chair in any of the bedrooms that you can't sit on, no corner of the room that you can't see to read in. The service, as in all the South Dakota park system, is recruited from cheerful, intelligent youngsters, mostly university students, and is so quietly efficient that you would never notice it except in contrast with what you find elsewhere.

There are only fifty rooms in the hotel proper. A constant overflow is taken care of in some thirty log bungalows on the same hillside. At the level of the lake are a number of modern cabins served by a restaurant, store and post office.

It is difficult to restrain one's enthusiasm for this charming place, partly because it is what it is and mostly because you never expected to find it here. But there must be something universal about its spell. Everybody seems willing to talk to

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you about it. And nobody interrupts to mention how much better everything is in Palm Springs, California.

You are quiet here and relaxed and more comfortable than you can ever remember having been before—and the gentle beauty all around you is something you can hardly bear to look at. And you feel that if there was one spot in Paha-Sapa that the Great Manitou had picked out for Himself, this must have been the one.

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## CHAPTER 7

### EASY COME, EASY GO!

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RAPID CITY—*Record Cattle Shipment*—August 26, 1944, was a record-breaking day in cattle shipment from the Rapid City Area when 700 two-year-old steers from the range were shipped from Hermosa. They belonged to E. M. Birdsall and Emmett Horgan. The shipment required twenty-seven cars and was valued at \$85,000, roughly about \$121.40 a steer.

—CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PAMPHLET

THERE were giants in those days!

I don't suppose I shall ever again see a man so definitely the master of his soul as Corb Morse. He was nearly eighty years old and dying when I last saw him. But the glow inside him hadn't dimmed any. He was just as contemptuous of death as he had been of life. He was probably the most fearless man I have ever known.

He was moving in a very exalted world when I first met him. He was a cattleman—a "plunger," some of the boys said, by which they meant that he was willing to take a chance on overextending his credit to hold his stock for a good price. And whatever the merits of this system for other people he had been a shrewd-enough judge of conditions to make it work for himself. He had two or three ranches scattered around the West River country—a couple of them down on White River, another near Wall in the Bad Lands.

The White River outfits were show places. But currently he was proudest of what he called "my county fair out there the other side of Wasta." He had been a prime mover in getting blooded stock onto the West River ranges. Everybody had good cattle then. But his Bad Lands herd was the best, no doubt about it—ten thousand head of white-faced Herefords, perhaps the biggest aggregation of cows in the

Black Hills region and certainly the most expensive. He made a nuisance of himself until he got Bill Pascoe to hang a picture of the herd in the Harney lobby. As art I didn't think it amounted to much. I thought it lacked arrangement and composition. . . . But after all, how do you go about arranging and composing ten thousand cows?

Pascoe was more openly critical. "What a picture!" he said when Morse had found a good place for it over the cigar counter. "Fifty smackers' worth of frame for what? A couple of yards of cows."

"They're beautiful," declared Corb. He wasn't listening.

To me, even more than the sourdoughs who occasionally dropped into the lobby, Corb Morse represented the spirit of the Old West. The impression stemmed no doubt from the vogue in Western movies which generally had to do with cowboys and seldom if ever with bearded old lads rocking gold cradles. But I guess I had the right idea. He was certainly the spirit of something—the sort of spirit that comes through an assay furnace.

I would have liked to talk with him as I did with sundry other cow hands who wandered about our section of Main Street. But I could never get near him. . . . Not that he was aloof. He seemed to have the social instincts of his kind. The trouble was he was just too popular.

I can still see him standing in the middle of the lobby floor with a mob of lesser men around him. He was always dressed in khaki, pretty well worn, with fine cowboy boots and a good Stetson hat. In winter he might add a mackinaw to the costume. He didn't wear long hair or chin whiskers or any other millinery of the vaudeville frontiersman. But somehow he always looked to me as Buffalo Bill might have looked if Bill's carving had been a little bit rougher.

The winter came suddenly that year. I remember we had a flurry of snow in mid-September. Then along about the first of November the cold set in and it never let up till spring. It was particularly bad one night when Corb came in from his place out east of town. He had put up his horse at Roush's livery barn to keep it from freezing to death and I heard him tell Pascoe that he thought he'd get lost in the blizzard coming across the street.

He went into the bar and downed a couple of hot toddies but he didn't intend to stay there for the evening.

"I've got business," he said. "They're pushing a snowplow out about midnight and they're going to give me a lift to Buffalo Gap. Going to look over some of O'Neill's stuff tomorrow, maybe. It's a hell of a night for a cow to be out without a fur overcoat. . . ."

It was about an hour later when the half-frozen cow poke stumbled up to the desk and asked for him. Tragedy never had such perfect timing. Just as the cowboy turned away from the clerk, Corb came out of the dining room. The messenger seemed ready to burst into tears. He fumbled for a moment with his ice-crusting hat and then hurried through the news that we had all only partly guessed.

"They're all gone, Corb," he blurted. "All of 'em!" It seemed too shocking for him to believe it himself.

"Every last one of 'em went over the cliff at Big Foot Pass in the blizzard. We never could head 'em. . . ."

That meant, of course, that Corb's ten thousand beautiful Herefords, something more than a half-million dollars' worth of blooded livestock had fallen to death in the Bad Lands. He never changed expression, although, as we all knew, he had just been wiped out.

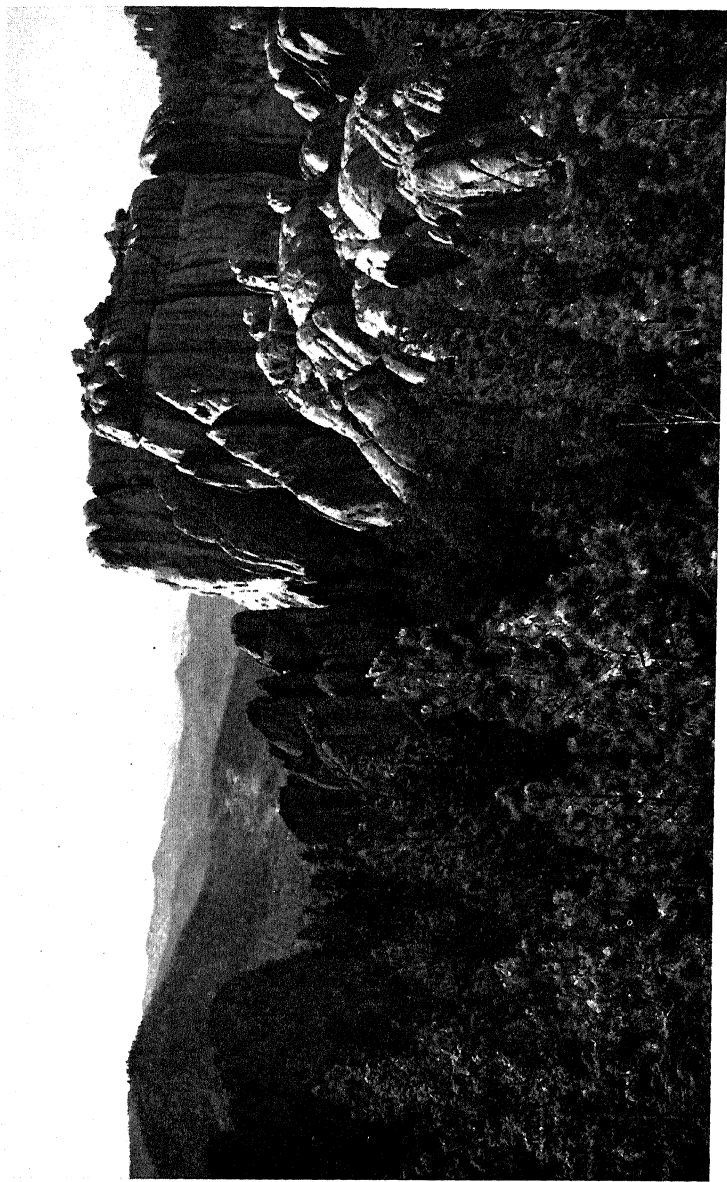
"Well," he said casually, "Easy come, easy go."

Tom Sweeney came originally from somewhere in New York but it hurt him to mention it. He didn't belong in that country, he said after taking a trip there to find out. There weren't any "good old Swedes" coming around to shake you by the hand. And people back there had got so narrow and hidebound that they thought a forty-acre lot was big enough to breathe in.

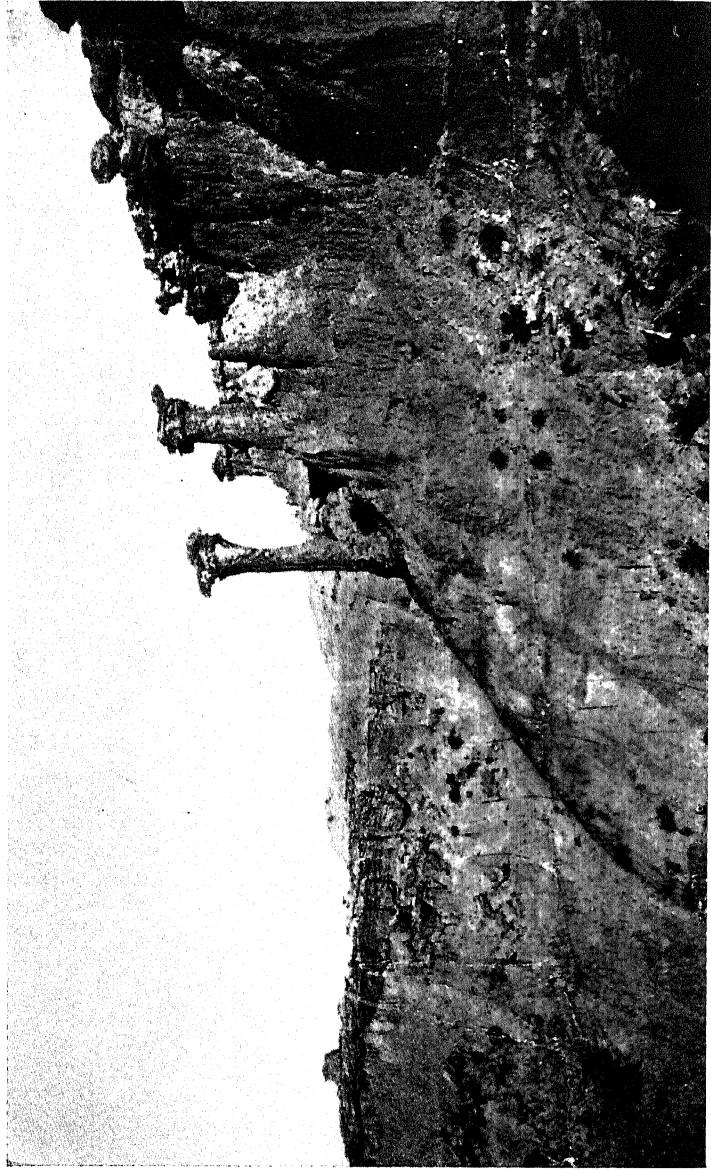
"I always felt this country out here ought to be good for something—or somebody," he said. "And I suppose it's me. I came to Rapid City thirty—thirty-five—years ago and decided to grow up with the town, and I guess one of us just didn't grow up. It doesn't matter much. We fit each other no matter how you figure it." Which had at least a modicum of truth in it. Tom Sweeney would have got along just about as well in Deadwood or Belle Fourche or Timbuktu. . . . But if there had been no Tom Sweeney, Rapid City would have been compelled to invent him.

When he died, incongruously, in an automobile accident, he left the biggest hole in the Black Hills since the Deadwood fire. His memory is still green and when you talk to any of the old-timers you know that he is spiritually present. But you realize after a while that he has quit squirting adrenalin into the Old West, and, lacking stimulus, the Old West that he knew shows signs of dying all over again.

Tom Sweeney was the greatest showman of his period, greater than Buffalo Bill, General Nelson A. Miles and Theodore Roosevelt of Medora. He might readily have ranked with Gutzon Borglum. But



Across the Hills, Harney Peak region.



The Ostrich Heads, Bad Lands National Monument.

comparisons are futile. It is certain that the romance of the frontier never got a chance to show any thin spots when he was acting as the impresario. As fast as a tradition wore out he made a new one. He not only glamorized the past; he knew how to hang an atmosphere of poignant nostalgia on something that happened day before yesterday.

If there weren't any stage robberies or Indian fights in the days when he was prodding the destinies of Rapid City, well, no matter. He could make a thrilling experience out of buying a cinnamon roll at Swander's Bakeshop and a species of high melodrama out of a trip over the hill to Oleson's Dairy Ranch. The adventure of living in the Black Hills which began in the gold rush was going to keep right on being the adventure of living in the Black Hills, no matter what the calendar might say.

All through the Hills you used to see his slogan: TOM SWEENEY WANTS TO SEE YOU. And, for one reason or another, he really meant it. Like all great showmen he was a great salesman. He could have sold anything—and frequently did.

His hardware establishment was one of the biggest in South Dakota, and his turnover of goods shipped from factory to consumer was fabulous. But he hated the drudgery of accounting. It was much pleasanter to talk than to check off items on an inventory. It was much easier to go fishing than to balance the ledger. To most of his friends and a few of his well-informed competitors his success in business was a major miracle. He never seemed to know what anything cost, and his attitude toward bills receivable was scandalous. He might know how much was owing to him but it was a rare occasion when he could remember who owed it.

Despite all that it is probable that his losses never amounted to much. His system of accounting was less a matter of figures than of mental agility, less a matter of memory than of deduction.

Consider his theory of paying bills.

"Always pay your bills promptly," he told me once in an involved explanation of how he had managed to make a good living throwing merchandise out the back door and picking up the dollars as somebody hurled them through the front window.

"If you pay your bills right away," he said, "you get a discount for cash. But that isn't the main consideration. You also have some jobber or manufacturer doing the bookkeeping. As long as you keep going in this system, you always know where you stand. As long as the checks don't bounce, you're solvent."

He was pretty shrewd about what he had to charge off to profit and



loss. It was his object, he said, to make the charge profit and profit. And after a while I learned how he did that. He had quite an active trade in saddles—fairly expensive saddles. So if the annual inventory discovered a saddle short, the loss might be considerable. That, however, never bothered the resourceful Sweeney. He merely charged it to one of the big outfits where nobody ever knew how many saddles were delivered—certainly not to a total within one or two saddles. Somebody had got the saddle and somebody paid up and when charges for lost saddles were rotated through the course of many years the right outfit paid as often as not.

I had some personal experience with Mr. Sweeney's salesmanship the first time I ever met him. I had gone into his store to buy a bit of horse equipment on my own account—not having been yet apprised of how such matters were carried on the books.

"Well, how do you do?" inquired Mr. Sweeney, conveying the impression that I had made the whole day brighter just by coming through the door. "I am so glad to see you again."

(I had never seen him before in my life.)

"And I hope your good wife is well, and all the lovely little children."

(I had none of either but I let the welcome, the good old hearty Western welcome, go on.)

"And is there any way at all that I can be of service to you on this lovely day?"

And then I told him I wanted to buy a saddle. He showed me a hand-carved show model specially priced at \$287. I said it was a little steep and he admitted it. Mr. Sweeney seldom argued about anything. That was part of his charm.

"It is not cheap," he said, "but it isn't unreasonable either. Not for a fine, elegant piece of leathercraft like that. Notice the fine carving. Notice the beautiful grain of the leather. Isn't she a hummer? Isn't she a dandy? And along with the saddle you get the stirrups, pommel and cantle without extra charge."

I gasped at that. I knew of course that the Sweneys of a cow town would identify me instantly as a tenderfoot. But it hadn't occurred to me that I might seem so completely tender.

"What about a whip?" I inquired a little snappily. He never turned a hair.

"Of course, the whip," he said. "Certainly the whip is included in the sale—for this day only. And it is a genuine leather whip. You can have a short size with a loop that goes over your wrist, or you can have

the postilion size, which is six feet long and is carried in a special holder."

I shook my head sadly. "I'm afraid I can't make it, Mr. Sweeney," I told him. "My bank balance won't stand it. Even if I take advantage of your special gift offer and pay only \$287 for saddle and accessories that is still \$287. And I still have to buy a horse."

"Oh, hell!" said Mr. Sweeney. "You can pick up a horse plenty good enough from one of these Indians anywhere around here for fourteen dollars."

I think that I began to appreciate him from that moment. He didn't sell me the saddle at \$287—or any saddle—but he seemed to have had a pleasant time trying.

He was seldom nonplused by anything that happened in one of these conferences in the store—but occasionally he was sorely tested. One day he was pouring on the charm for a farm woman whom he vaguely remembered as an old customer.

"And, how *do* you do?" he began in what might be classed as his solicitous-friend-of-the-family approach. "And *how's* the family?"

"Mary's sick," said the woman.

"Oh, I'm so *sorry*," murmured the old friend of the etc. "I'm so sorry. . . . And how's your *husband*?"

The woman looked at him blankly. "Why, Mr. Sweeney," she said, "you know my husband's been dead for fifteen years."

"Oh, I'm so *sorry*," consoled Mr. Sweeney so sincerely that you could smell the tuberoses. "I'm so sorry. . . ."

He had a trick of merchandising that has been widely discussed in our day as a new discovery, the preliminary effort to make the customer feel that he is considered important. Everybody in Sweeney's shop had been made to feel important except me. All I was made to feel was that I didn't know which end of a horse you hung the bridle on. On the other hand Tom remembered me and we became pretty good friends, whereas he didn't remember anybody else. He apparently didn't have to.

I came in one day to find Benny Cohen, his long-time assistant, arguing with him about a pump.

"But you can't have lost a pump!" declared Cohen apparently with some logic.

"I didn't say I lost it," corrected Mr. Sweeney. "I haven't lost it. I've merely mislaid it. What kind of pump is it?"

"How the hell should I know?" inquired the assistant, expecting no

answer. "All that's on this memorandum is that you sold somebody a pump worth sixty-five dollars and you haven't been paid for it yet. And you think he's a Swede."

"I must find it, my boy," Mr. Sweeney assured him. "A pump worth sixty-five dollars must be quite a pump. I'd like to see it."

His research technique in this case was something that I came to know by heart. He went on with the same routine day after day, week in, week out, for he had a lot of Scandinavian customers and he couldn't afford to overlook a single one.

Every time a Swede or a Norwegian came through the door Mr. Sweeney would be greeting him with outstretched hand in the familiar greeting: "How do you do? . . . How is the good lady?" and all the rest of the family questionnaire. The difference in this new procedure was that after the last breath of sympathy and solicitude for the quick, the sick and the dead he would ask the sixty-four-dollar question: "And are you getting good service out of the pump?"

If the man said, "What pump?" or "What the what are you talking about?" Mr. Sweeney would move patiently on to the next subject.

The point of it is that one fine day he asked a Mr. George Hansen, "How do you like the pump?"

Mr. Hansen said, "Fine!"

And Mr. Sweeney bellowed triumphantly to Mr. Cohen, "Mark down somewhere that Mr. George Hansen likes that sixty-five-dollar pump and his address is R. F. D. 87, Box Elder."

Well, so went the stories with Tom himself acting them out. It is not surprising that they should spread like flowering clover now that he is gone. I have suspected that his slips of memory and what he advertised as his amazingly bad guesses always occurred after he had sat up all night somewhere completing an audit. I can hardly imagine people like Jim Halley giving him all the credit that the law would permit when he needed it if he hadn't known at least enough to keep sales records. However, as God had made an amazing character out of him to start off with, it was only proper that he should expand his opportunity. So far as I know he never did an unkind thing. He never cheated you except in conversation. He never lied to you until he was sure you weren't going to believe him anyway. And whether you are interested or not, he is still an influence on the city that he never thought would grow up.

## CHAPTER 8

### GONE, ALL ARE GONE—

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RAPID CITY—*The Chicago Motor Club estimates that tourists spend an average of \$10 to \$15 per day per person for all travel expenses. The average per car is 3¼ persons. The average time spent in the Black Hills has been checked and estimated at 2½ days. . . . At \$15 a day this is about \$35 per tourist. A million tourists would equal \$35,000,000. Two million tourists would equal \$70,000,000.*—CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOLDER

TIMES had changed and the world was changing when Corbin Morse died. Rapid City was just on the verge of a building boom and in a year or two would double its population. There would be bombing ranges in the Bad Lands, and planes would be commuting between the Black Hills and London. In a few weeks after my last visit to him the nations would be at war again. But he would know little about that, or care.

It had been a long time since the town had seen anything of him. For two or three years he had been bedridden and nearly helpless. But that didn't bother him either. There was no pleasure in his visiting empty scenes, and he would rather live in loneliness than have the comradeship of people who could not understand him or talk his language.

His pleasure at seeing me was touching. "God!" he said, trying to sit up in bed. "They're not all dead yet! Sit down, damn it! You're standing in my light. . . ."

I was a little shocked to look at him—not that I hadn't known he was pretty sick but because I had never before realized his age. He had always been one of those men whose alertness makes them seem contemporaries of any company they are in. But here he was, nearly eighty years old and looking it. As I took a chair I knew that death was sitting closer to the bed than I was.

He seemed to know what I was thinking. "I guess they got the rope on me, boy!" he said.

I tried to mumble a convincing lie. But he wasn't having it.

"No, boy," he said. "They've caught up with me and I know it. But you can forget all this stuff about empty saddles in the old corral. I sure had a good ride. . . ."

Well, I guess he'd had a good ride, all right. This house where he lay dying would have shown anybody that, even though no stranger could have glimpsed the ghostly pageant standing in the shadows. He had built it in the early eighties—a log shanty five miles east of Rapid on what the optimistic government called a farm claim. Young Mr. Morse from the Atlantic seaboard may not have known much about farming. But he was nobody's fool. Painstakingly he set out to interest cows in a diet of Buffalo grass.

Nobody in Rapid City cared much what he did. The philosophy of the breadwinners then as later, had been *Sauve qui peut!* But if they gave him a thought at all, they would have taken a dismal view of his prospects. Because of transportation difficulties the cattle trade was almost purely local. And there wasn't going to be much of a market in this area until somebody made that big strike up on Rapid or Box Elder—which, of course, was indefinite.

Corb, however, went ahead with his project. He had decided when he settled here that the Black Hills country would one day get down to a normal way of life and attract enough of a populace to develop some industries besides gold mining, stage robbery and three-card monte. When the population hereabout showed any sign of permanence, there would be railroads. When in 1886 the railroads came, he was ready for business.

In twenty years he had become tremendously wealthy. He had five thousand acres adjoining his original plot east of Rapid. He had six thousand acres on Pine Ridge Reservation and a third ranch of eight thousand acres on Cain Creek between the White River and the Cheyenne. From 1900 on he never handled less than ten thousand head of cattle in a year and one year he shipped thirty-six thousand. By that time he was beginning to get a national reputation.

Somewhere around the beginning of the new century he began to enlarge his house. He rebuilt the original log house and walled in one end of it with a tremendous fireplace.

"I hooked a kitchen on behind it and added a wing for a bedroom," he said. "And after that it just grew."

It turned out to be one of the most remarkable buildings in the Hills, for money was no longer any object to Corb. Every modern convenience except electric light went into the place.

"Bright lights always remind me of the gas torches at the front of a circus tent," he explained.

A dining room appeared alongside the kitchen and, one by one, four or five bedrooms stretched across the front with a long porch connecting them. No two of these rooms were alike although Corb had never heard anything about "period treatment." They ranged from Second Empire to Early American. But they were completely furnished and all in character. The first ranch house was now one big living room and no attempt had been made to "improve" it. The logs had been varnished, but otherwise the walls were unchanged. The original hand-hewn puncheons were on the floor. Bales of Kermanshah and short-napped Saruk rugs and forests of teak and mahogany had gone into the other rooms. But the living room was the sole property of the master of the house. And like Corb Morse himself it was comfortable and honest and plain.

The house became the neighborhood show place, of course. Dinner at Corbin Morse's delightful old ranch house was rated a social event. But Corb had some quirk about local society that I could never get straight. He was polite and pleasant to all the people in Rapid and never showed resentment toward anybody. But he had been hurt somewhere in his youth—which may have explained why he put up such an establishment on an isolated hilltop in the first place—and he had a definite distaste for female strivers.

However, he was no misanthrope. He liked to be with people who interested him. And as time went on he got to know a lot of them. He began to entertain a number of visitors in the 1900's—some of them personages, some of them just charming nobodies, but all people. Rapid was kept well informed of it because, in his bachelor establishment, he had occasional need to invite some of the local matrons as chaperons. His guest book, if he had bothered to keep it, would have read like *Who's Who in America*.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of his guests and Mark Twain and William Jennings Bryan and Jim Corbett. Morse explained afterward that he invited Bryan mostly because he couldn't make him out. Bryan came out to spend the week end with an Argentine gaucho named Guttierrez and a young couple appearing in the *Chimes of Normandy* company on tour in the Hills.

"Bryan was a fine man," Morse recalled. "He didn't have a dirty trait in him, and I guess I liked him mostly because he liked the South American cowboy, Guttierrez. He was stubborn and tough when he got an idea in his head. But aside from that he was a pretty good guy. I kind of liked his argument about free silver. I was for anything that would get a little more money out in this country in the nineties. But I didn't like what the Democrats were saying about lifting tariffs on South American beef. So we talked it out, some. And in the end I guess we didn't get anywhere. . . . That's what always happens with arguments. But he had a good time. He didn't seem to mind listening to Corbett, who talked most of the time. He wouldn't take a drink. But he didn't mind if I did. I really enjoyed myself."

I asked him why a record of this old conference had never been recorded in the public prints.

"Hell," he said, "this happened five miles out of town and nothing ever got into Joe Gossage's paper even when it blew up under his nose."

He put in a swimming pool and a summer kitchen and hired a French chef to care for visitors who might not appreciate the arts of Charley Gooding, the old chuck-wagon cook. He engaged another professional to design and install the best cellar between the Missouri River and Denver. He put three or four more rooms into a guest house—just for overflow, he said.

All manner of people beat a path to his door. Lillian Russell once stayed at his house for two weeks after an arduous season. Richard Mansfield came vacationing. So did May Irwin and Anna Held and Virginia Harned and Dustin Farnum and Cy Young. They came for the first time as the result of personal invitations that piqued their interest. They came back as fancy directed them—on trips to the Pacific Coast or returning . . . on stopovers from Denver . . . or on the spur of the moment from New York. Corb provided what transportation was available. Nothing was too good for his guests if he could get it. So some of them came in private cars, quite a number in special trains and a fair sprinkling of them in the ranch buckboard.

Painters and musicians came to the fabulous ranch house to work or relax. Some came for company and some for quiet, and their host made it possible for both to get what they wanted. There was hardly a politician within a thousand miles who didn't ring the doorbell at some time or other, to meet some other politician or to mull over a problem, or, not infrequently, to ask Corb's advice. Once I saw Major General Leonard Wood on the Rapid City platform taking the night train to

Omaha. He had appeared suddenly, unnoticed by anybody, and I didn't ask him where he'd been.

I don't know of any three-ring salon like Corb Morse's in America—or anywhere else.

Something of this was what you saw when you looked at the old man's bright, kindly eyes and his sunken cheeks and his transparent skin. He hadn't had much luck since that night at Big Foot Pass. The special trains had stopped running and quiet had come permanently to the rambling house on the hill. The cattle had gone and little by little the land had gone, too. Now the house, falling into disrepair and stripped of anything that might bring quick cash, was all that was left to him. A friendly banker who held the mortgage saw no need for hurrying the foreclosure. He had no income and nothing left to pawn. A devoted housekeeper, old and near death herself, did what she could to nurse him. The bit of food he ate and such comforts as he still enjoyed were brought to him daily by Al Nystrom's wife, Wilma, who had known him when she was a little girl in Wall.

You could easily get maudlin about a tragedy like this. But it's not exactly the story of a rake's progress. Corb Morse wasn't dissolute although he tossed his money away with a carefree hand and never read the copybook aphorisms about rainy days. Friendly relationships aren't necessarily high revelry just because they are expensive. Corb Morse when you add him up, even with red ink, was a pretty decent citizen. And as for fair-weather friends, the sycophants who disappear when the generous patron is in dire straits, well, it seems Corb Morse didn't have any. The people who had sung and danced and banqueted in this once happy house were nearly all of them dead and the remainder looking at age and disintegration themselves.

"I haven't gone into Rapid for years," he said as if reading my thoughts. "Everybody I had anything to do with around there is gone. Where's Bill Pascoe? Do you remember the day I made him hang up the picture of the cows in the Harney lobby? I wish I'd gone in to see if it's still there. . . . Jim Halley is gone, and Tom Sweeney and old Ole Oleson, the dairyman. . . . There was a character for you—that Ole. Never did a thing in his life but work around that little ranch at Box Elder or in that creamery over on St. Joe Street . . . never got drunk, never looked at a woman, never had an enemy in the world. And then he goes to Minneapolis and gets murdered in a hotel room. Maybe I'll



know about how that happened pretty soon. I'll probably be seeing Ole. . . ."

He didn't sound regretful about the prospect—merely curious.

"Then there was George Schneider," he went on. "He was a very good man, too. And he was careful—didn't throw his money away." I thought that this was going to be some sort of apology for himself. But it wasn't—quite. "His bank folded up under him," he said in a puzzled tone. "Why do you suppose that happened? I can't seem to remember a single thing that he did wrong. And then the roof caves in. And you remember Harry Wentze and what a nice lad he was. He never ran around with that Main Street gang. He was good, sober and industrious and a careful banker. So his bank folds up, too. . . . Now George and Harry are both dead; the loss was too much for them to take.

"Well, if you are asking me, that is the reason I never go to town any more. My friends aren't there. My friends aren't here, either, but while I'm lying here in one room I don't have to look at the places where they used to be. On the other hand you've got to look at Rapid when you go into it. It seems to be the same place, although they've paved the streets and put up a hotel and built a new high school. But if that's my old town I don't know it because they've filled up the place with a lot of new people."

"Well," I said, "the world has to revolve whether you or I like it or not. There have to be new people."

"Maybe you're right," he conceded. "It's just your way of saying that there has to be a new town. Instead of getting shot at by Indians and freezing to death in blizzards, all these new brothers are going to get chased by installment collectors and worry all their lives about bank balances. . . . This may still be the West and they still may be in it. But they aren't going to have the fun we had." He seemed really to believe it, and I tried to control my senseless anger at the trick his luck had played on him when he was no longer able to fight back.

"Well," I told him, "if you get any fun, you've got to pay for it—and it seems to me that the price is pretty steep."

He smiled and looked at me as he had looked at the shocked messenger on the night the herd went over Big Foot.

"Easy come, easy go," he said.

When I left I promised to come back to see him again. . . . But there was a war, and, when I next came back to the Black Hills, he was dead. Somebody else occupies the old house on the hill now, probably with

no use for more than a quarter of the rooms. I was back in that section not so long ago. The spread of Rapid City had not yet overcome it, and the featureless plains looked the same as they did when young Corbin came from Ulster County, New York, to hunt for a fortune. Almost I could step back a little in time—farther back than the day when I had last talked to a dying old man in his ghost-filled house. I could almost see into that remarkable era when the great and the near great of Broadway and Washington and that other world east of the Missouri were making their strange pilgrimages to this prairie hilltop. But the picture was hazy and it didn't go back quite far enough. There were no major generals riding the buckboard and holding onto their dignity, no glamour girls in the rented closed carriage from Roush's Livery, no private cars or special trains on the sidings at the edge of Rapid.

Probably I had been looking for an era that has gone away just as the calendar says. Probably nobody comes looking for Corb, and Corb, in turn, comes looking for nobody. But I'd like to ask Corb's successors about it some night—some night when all the shutters of the old house are rattling and the wind is whispering through the logs by the chair where Lillian Russell sat, or Anna Held, or Corb himself . . . easy come, easy go.

## CHAPTER 9

### RAILROADER

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*RAPID CITY—Without much advance notice, it becomes fairly plain that the War Department intends to locate what may be the world's largest bomber base at Rapid City, S. Dak. . . .*

—Press Dispatch from Washington, D. C.  
October 28, 1948

WHAT Paul Bunyan may or may not have done to the Black Hills is problematical, for Paul went his wonderful way without leaving a written record. Not so that other fabulous character, Alex Johnson. In Rapid City he is memorialized by the impressive building that bears his name—physically one of the finest hotels between Minneapolis and Spokane. Hundreds of people are still alive who knew him well and shared the amazing confidences now set out in his seven-volume diary. In Main Street the hordes of Johnny-Come-Latelys who speed the weary traveler on his way by selling him copper-plated lead horses and fake Indian beads speak of Alex Johnson with awe and reverence as the man who, God forbid, promoted their business by luring the tourists across the Missouri River. He is now an authentic legend in the Hills country although even before his death he had ceased to be an influence on the region's weird economy.

A. C. Johnson came into South Dakota in 1882 to take up a homestead west of Watertown. He got a seasonal job with the Van Deusen Elevator Company, studied telegraphy on the side and was made station agent for the Chicago and North Western Railway at Doland. In 1886 he was a traveling auditor for the railroad and after that moved up through the grades until his retirement in 1929 found him vice-president in charge of operations for the entire system.

His place in the history of the state is assured principally by the fact that he, more than any other individual campaigner engineered the

selection of Pierre as the permanent capital of South Dakota. Pierre, of course, is a hundred and sixty-odd miles from Rapid City and the interest of the Black Hills in its political status might be negligible save for one thing. The North Western's choice of Pierre for the capital site and the Milwaukee Road's demand for Mitchell brought about a situation in which the Hills' vote might be a deciding factor. So rival electioneering parties cultivated the hitherto unimportant miners and cowmen and lumberjacks and buttered them with promises. The result of this campaign, as it appears in the official records, is that Pierre, an unprepossessing little prairie town, was made the capital. The unofficial result was that rail connections were finally established between Rapid City and the Missouri—not one line but two.

Inasmuch as Johnson had worked so constantly and ably to provoke the fight, the grateful populace of the mountains gave him full credit for its profitable conclusion. In 1907—when the West River railroads were completed—he was living in Winona, Minnesota. But nobody in western South Dakota would have suspected it. He had already taken a place in local mythology a file or two ahead of Wild Bill Hickok.

There was reason for that. He loved the Hills and did what he could to make the rest of the world aware of them. He envisioned the West River prairies and the Bad Lands not as a region of half-starved little farms but as a prosperous cattle country. He saw the deep cool gorges and the high plateaus of the mountains as an easily accessible recreation district for half the Middle West. Travel to this region might make good business for the railroad, of course—the automobile was no competition in the beginning. Johnson as a smart railroadman could not overlook his opportunity.

But there was something more than that behind his constant promotion of the better and more beautiful life "out where the West begins." He found plenty of reasons for parking his private car on the sidings of Deadwood or Hot Springs or Rapid or Belle Fourche during the years when he served the North Western under the slave-driving Marvin Hughitt. After his retirement he put in most of his declining years in a suite in the Alex Johnson Hotel in Rapid. No one can ever say he lacked the strength of his convictions.

Folks accustomed to the stuffy traditionalism of railroad management and its humorless adherence to routine might well be astonished, not to say shocked, at some of his exploits.

One day as he sat in Rapid City doing his part in the luring of Calvin Coolidge from the Washington merry-go-round to the South Dakota

game preserve, some unnamed admirer left a present for him—a cub bear in a neat crate.

“Feed him,” he ordered. “Get him a steak or a bale of hay or a jar of honey or whatever bears eat. And then ship him to Billings, general agent at Winona. Send Billings a message telling him to take good care of this valuable specimen until I get back.”

So it was done. Johnson went back to Chicago by way of Omaha and avoided Winona for seven months. During that time the bear had gained a hundred pounds and was developing a temper. Billings bought a suitable cage and shipped him to the general passenger agent of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha division at St. Paul. Thence the bear traveled through the offices of most of the North Western’s officials till he finally came to a permanent home in the Brookfield Zoo.

“Good thing, these little impromptu presents,” Johnson commented on his next appearance in Rapid City as Cal Coolidge departed for home wearing the feathers of a Sioux chief. “They provoke thought and stimulate ingenuity . . . excellent for morale. . . .”

After which he went over to a poultry ranch in North Rapid and bought a dozen guinea fowl already crated. These he shipped to Dr. Charles Mayo, Rochester, Minnesota. But this time he sent no message, and the name on the shipping ticket was not his own.

“Dr. Charlie’s been complaining that some neighbor’s chickens get him up too early in the morning,” he explained. “So now he’ll have some chickens of his own and he can get the neighbor up too early. It’s a sort of homeopathic treatment.”

It was three months before Johnson brought more details of this interesting matter back to Rapid . . . and for once he showed no willingness to talk.

“I stopped in at Dr. Charlie’s place on the way home,” he said a little gruffly. “And I noticed one guinea running around the yard. So I said to Charlie: ‘That’s a nice new chicken. Where did you get it?’ And Charlie sort of clouded up and said: ‘Some damn fool sent me a dozen and I can’t make out where from. There were eleven roosters and one hen. . . .’”

One of Johnson’s close friends was Scotty Philip, owner of what was probably the largest buffalo herd in the world and operator of one of the last big cattle outfits in the West River country.

With the westward advance of the Pierre, Rapid City and North Western Railway from the Missouri, a three-mile spur track was run

through the gullies of the Bad River to the Philip corral. It paid for itself at first, for Scotty shipped vast loads of cattle to the Eastern markets. But the old ranges were broken up and homesteaders crisscrossed the prairie with barbed-wire fences. The great herds dwindled to a few truckloads and for years no locomotive hauled strings of stock cars up to the ranch gate. In 1919 Chester Dike, the engineer who had built the Rapid City line, arrived with a construction crew and proceeded to tear up the track.

The job was just completed on the day Scotty Philip died.

The next morning Dike got a call from Johnson in Chicago.

"That spur to Scotty Philip's ranch," inquired Johnson, "what about it?"

"There isn't any spur," replied Dike. "We just pulled it up."

"Put it back," ordered Johnson.

"What?"

"That's what I said. You've got to get that track back down by tomorrow morning."

"But that's impossible. We've hauled the steel out and half the ties are broken. . . ."

"Get the track down anyway. If you can't find the rails you took up, take some out of sidings at Fort Pierre or someplace. Scotty Philip is dead—do you understand that? And a lot of his old cronies in the Black Hills want to go to his funeral in a special train out of Belle Fourche. . . . There's no other way they can get there and you'd better get that track in."

So Chester Dike and his crew, working for twenty-four hours without rest, relaid the track. After the funeral train had passed on its way back to Belle Fourche, they pulled up the rails again. But, as Johnson said in his message of congratulation and thanks, Scotty probably would have been willing to excuse that.

Inasmuch as Alex Johnson's field of activity extended from Chicago to Lander, Wyoming, and from St. Paul to the Kansas-Nebraska state line it is not remarkable that he had to cover a lot of territory doing favors for his friends. He was sitting at his ease on a vacation in Spearfish Canyon when he got a call from A. K. Gardner of Huron asking him to perform a bit of black magic that eventually took him on a two-thousand-mile journey and consumed a week of his time. All that he had to do was recover a cancelled ticket surrendered to a conductor on

a run between Huron, South Dakota, and Mankato, Minnesota, six or eight months before.

Mr. Johnson took a dim view of the assignment. "There are literally tens of thousands of tickets of one kind or another turned in every day," he said. "They are sent to Chicago to be destroyed. They are not classified according to origin and they all look alike. So unless you know the number of this particular one . . ."

"This one was different," explained Mr. Gardner. "It was railroad scrip—the kind you've been selling in books at a reduced price. It was issued this year."

"Then it's only one in about one hundred thousand instead of one in ten million," admitted Johnson. "What do you want it for?"

"I'm attorney for the defense in a Mann Act case," said the petitioner. And he named the principals, two people whose names have long since been forgotten.

"My client admits that he was in Mankato on the same day the woman was there," he went on. "But he denies that they were together or that he paid her fare across the state line. The woman is equally positive about this point. She says she paid her own fare in railroad scrip—and that's what I've been talking about."

"I'll look," said Johnson. "That's the best I can do. If you're in Chicago next week come and see me."

So, as one might have suspected, Mr. Gardner happened to be in Chicago the next week, and he paid a visit to Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson took him through a succession of offices into a room containing an implement that looked something like a cement mixer.

"I just wanted you to see this," he said. "So you would understand why there isn't much chance that I shall ever find your lost ticket. All used tickets from every part of this system eventually come here and are dumped into this machine. We turn it on." He pushed a button and the big wheel in the middle of the device began to turn. . . . "Cutting and grinding machinery inside reduces the pasteboard to a clean pulp which we sell to paper factories for the manufacture of other tickets." He pushed another button and the machine stopped. . . . "You can see, of course, that no bit of printed paper can retain its identity after such a processing—unless . . . Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle! Here is one that stuck to the outside of the wheel!

"Wouldn't it be marvelous if this turned out to be the one you're looking for! One chance in a couple of million—but it's certainly the right color. It looks like a piece of scrip. . . . And so help me, it is. And

look! Right here is where your client's friend or the conductor or somebody wrote her initials across the back of it—and the date. I must tell you Gardner, that this is really a first-class miracle.”

“It certainly is,” admitted Mr. Gardner. And still a little numb he went back to Huron to get a no doubt well-merited acquittal.

Johnson prided himself on his personal acquaintance with every conductor, engineer, fireman and brakeman on the lines between the Mississippi and Gold Run Creek. The corollary of this interesting proposition was that they also knew him.

He had a Western railroadman's ideas about Western railroading so he was no severe taskmaster. He made no note of little idiosyncrasies as long as they did not damage company property or endanger the lives of passengers. It was his custom to represent the employees before the disciplinary boards as a sort of one-man grievance committee. On the other hand he resented bitterly what he called “taking advantage of good nature.”

There was one Joe Canby, a conductor on the Pierre line, who late in life learned what some people see in alcohol and took to insulting passengers and quarreling with members of the crew. On one occasion he got off his train at Wall—presumably to visit the Wall Drugstore—and did not return. On account of the Wall episode he was removed from the service by special order of the president. The delegation that waited on Alex Johnson was unusually large.

Mr. Johnson was annoyed. “I've interceded for this man twice before,” he said. “And the funny part of it is he's a lad I've never seen in my life, the one man on this run I don't know—and he causes me more trouble than all the rest of you put together. I don't get a chance to meet him because he's always being laid off and maybe he'd better stay that way.”

“You can't do that,” argued Bill Chambers, who had survived some eccentric tendencies long enough to rate as dean of the conductors on the Dakota division.

“Poor Joe is an old man. He's got white hair and a daughter with t.b.—and his wife just died. And in a few more months he'd be up for his pension. And . . .”

“I know,” said Johnson. “I've heard it before many times when these doddering white-haired slobs got drunk. But of course a man like that ought to be saved. He's so useful to the company.”

So Johnson went before Marvin Hughitt and got an order reinstating



one Joseph Canby. It was generally conceded that nobody else could have done it.

Six months later he got aboard the morning local out of Rapid to visit a ranch he owned near Midland. Bill Chambers, deadheading back to Pierre, slipped into the seat alongside him and after the fashion of railroaders talked about railroading. The conductor, a dark man with bushy eyebrows and a shock of black hair, came to look at their passes and mumble a good morning. Johnson, distracted by the chatter of Chambers, paid no attention to the conductor until the train stopped at New Underwood and the station agent addressed him as Canby.

"Canby," Johnson repeated to Bill Chambers. "Is this conductor the Canby you raised such a row about?"

"He is," admitted Chambers shamelessly. "I thought you knew him. But anyway he's Joe Canby and he's back at work and he's very grateful."

Johnson sniffed.

"He doesn't look like the wreck you described to me. "You said he had white hair—and this man hasn't any white hair."

Chambers looked at him forgivingly. "Oh, yes, he has," he protested earnestly. "He's got plenty of white hair. But just now he's wearing a settee."

Chambers has been dead for some years now. But he lived long enough to take his place among the Black Hills-Bad Lands galaxy of legendary paladins.

As a railroad hero he ranks, probably, just next to Casey Jones, the brave engineer, for, while no song was ever written about him, he is still the central figure in an annual ceremony and every Memorial Day new columns of type retell his touching story. William Chambers, you may recall, was the conductor who stopped his train to spread flowers on the lonely grave of a little boy at Elrod, South Dakota.

The details of this observance are too well known to need lengthy repetition. The little boy had made a practice of waving at Bill's train and Bill had waved back. One day when the child failed to put in an appearance Bill investigated and discovered that he was dead and buried. The parents had moved on with a railroad construction crew. Thereafter Bill stopped regularly to leave his flowers.

So much for the best-known phase of Bill Chambers' career. It comes as no surprise to learn that he did other important things. The broad

humanitarian instincts of such a man could never be confined and he was definitely no one-act performer.

In the 1900's and for some years afterward the country's railroads did quite a large business in cheap excursions. The official explanation for these bargains was that they interested people in travel—which, to anyone who ever rode a mile on an excursion, seems hardly likely. Furthermore, it was said, they promoted a little business for the merchants at the terminal point and thus encouraged good will toward the railroad, the merchants, the customers and—well—just everybody—and this, too, we doubt very much.

There is no questioning that excursions offered you a lot of mileage at a low price. For seventy-five cents you could ride from Elk Point in the southeast corner of the state to Hot Springs in the Black Hills by way of Brookings, Watertown, Aberdeen, Huron, Pierre and way points—somewhere, the experts declared, around a thousand miles. Sometimes these expeditions were made in special trains of such salvageable rolling stock as happened to be available. Sometimes they were carried in extra cars on regular trains. In any case the accommodations were limited. Generally one seat was provided for about every four travelers—for every six if you count babes in arms as individuals.

The Black Hills area had just about the same sort of excursions that were so numerous mentioned in the wreck reports elsewhere. They were universally scheduled for the hot season, which, on the South Dakota prairies and along the Great Wall of the Bad Lands, is pretty hot. They were also well patronized by housewives who felt they were entitled to a pleasant outing and children whose parents wished them to enjoy the broadening influence of travel. Virtually the only adult males on some of these trips were members of the train crew. And on more than one occasion this inventory included Conductor William Chambers.

Chambers, in the summer of 1910, was running out of Pierre and considerably harried by excursions to Hot Springs via Rapid City and Buffalo Gap. There came a day when he shuddered at the sound of the whistle of an approaching excursion train, when he began to shun his fellow man except such nontravelers as those to be found in the shade of The Elkhorn Café across the street from the railroad station.

He lost all track of time on excursion days and so it came about that one day he was still in the Elkhorn when he realized that his train had come in and was getting ready to depart for Hot Springs without him.

He rushed across the street just in time to give the high ball and climb aboard.

He was never able to give a very clear account of the first part of the voyage from that point, over the river, through old Fort Pierre and across the blistering prairie toward the west. His head was aching and there were clouds in front of his eyes, and there was a vague sense of unreality about the screaming of fifty or sixty hot babies who refused to be comforted. It took two and a half hours to get to Philip, which, so far as Mr. Chambers was concerned, had all the effect of two hours and a half in a Turkish bath. It didn't make him feel much better but it gave him some sense of what was going on around him.

These screaming babies, he suddenly realized, were actually screaming babies and not something that he had invented for himself. They certainly were upset about the whole business and obviously something ought to be done about it. This conviction was strengthened as the train rattled along another ten miles toward the Bad Lands. The expedition was somewhere about five miles east of Quinn when he suddenly reached up and jerked the emergency cord.

The train stopped. The engineer and fireman came running back along the track to find out what had happened. But Bill Chambers wasn't there to tell them. He had carried a couple of fire buckets into a pasture south of the track and was busily milking a cow.

He brought two buckets of milk back to the train and distributed it among his grateful patrons. It may not have been the best technique for increasing the pleasures of excursion trips. Certainly it had never been mentioned in any of the railroad's operating orders. But anyhow it seemed to him that the bedlam was considerably less noticeable for the rest of the journey.

Probably nothing would have come of this incident. Bill would have returned to his old routine at Pierre unhonored, unsung—and unrepri-manded—if someone hadn't mentioned it to somebody in Rapid. The next day a story complete in all details, including how long the train waited for Conductor Chambers to do his milking, appeared on the front page of the *Rapid City Daily Journal*.

At the end of the week Alex Johnson was called from Winona to wait on Marvin Hughitt in Chicago. He went into the president's office somewhat disturbed and wondering what dire development could have taken place in his territory without his knowing about it.

Mr. Hughitt, who was reading a copy of the *Rapid City Journal*,

looked up unsmiling. "There's quite a piece here about a conductor named William Chambers," he said gruffly. "Have you seen it?"

"Well . . . yes," admitted Johnson as he tried to think up something he might say in Bill's defense. "Chambers is a very good man. . . . Not once in a thousand years—and then, of course, it was a terribly hot day. . . ."

"That's what I'm talking about," roared Hughitt. "One conductor like that is worth more to this railroad than ten officers. This Chambers man has initiative and he has ingenuity and he goes around making good will for the company on a hot day in the Bad Lands. And nobody bothers to tell me about it. I have to wait and read it in the newspaper. . . ."

"I don't want any stories. I don't want any explanations. I just want something done for this man. I want him promoted. So you get back to Winona and do it!"

So Bill Chambers was given a traveling agent's job. He didn't like it much except that it gave him a chance to work out of Rapid City and smile happily as the excursion trains went by.

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## INFORMATION PIECE II

### *Buffalo Gap*

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THE North Western has torn up the spur that once gave this mellow cow town its importance as a junction. The state highway department by routing passenger-car traffic around it through Custer Park and Hot Springs has left it marooned on a strip of all but impassable gravel. So you aren't likely to see much of the place unless you are pulling a house trailer too high to get through the Hills tunnels. But there are some interesting features hereabout, such as the natural bridge and Calico Canyon—it has had a roaring history, and if only for old times' sake it deserves something better than oblivion.

Buffalo Gap is not yet a ghost town, but a lot of its former glories have vanished and its marvelous folklore is rapidly getting away from everybody but old-timers with long memories. Once it was the riotous terminal of the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley's first railroad line into the Black Hills. It had status as a cattle shipping point and its place on the timetable was assured as the point of departure for the little branch to Hot Springs.

Now it looks very little like a cow poke's rest haven and it is no longer a compulsory stopping-off place for travelers into the southern Hills. It is a quiet, peaceful place whose Main Street, as Mark Twain said about a similar thoroughfare, is "still and Sunday-like."

It is the last place in this region a stranger might pick as an example of what made the Wild West wild. But that is because strangers don't realize how much tradition, romance and, let us say, chivalry, may lie behind a couple of chain-store fronts.

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Strong characters lived in the place because, it is natural to suppose, they had to be. George Boland, our best authority on the last days of Lame Johnny, was one of them. In addition to being proprietor and manager of two stage depots he was also U. S. postmaster at Buffalo Gap, with all the revenues and perquisites that the job rated. In these days of party-line squabbles over such plums it is interesting to note that he took the appointment merely because nobody else would have it or was likely to stay in the place long enough to work at it.

Colonel William Thornby, discoverer of Hot Springs, tried to get Boland to join in filing a claim on the place. He might have owned half of a valuable townsite had not his duty to the far-off government—and other things—interfered. He finished no better off than Thornby, who didn't get any of Hot Springs either.

Thornby wrote afterward:

At that time, he was the stage agent at Buffalo Gap, and distributing postmaster for all the mail that came into the Black Hills. His depot was a great stopping place for all the emigrants, and he was the busiest man I ever saw.

The night I was at his place, a peculiar incident occurred. Col. John B. Fury, post-office inspector, with one of the high department officials from Washington, was there, and he held the outgoing stage at the Gap. While he was checking up Boland in the post-office and the distributing system, Boland was busy finding stable room for the transient stock and selling hay and feed to the emigrants. The Washington official became very indignant because George did not give him greater attention. He started a loud reprimand, whereupon Boland got angry and gave the Washington official the worst dressing down I had ever had heard a man get in my life.

He wound up by firing the post-office—which consisted of a beer case with twenty-four pigeon holes—out into the road, and ordering the Washington man off the reservation. It required all of Col. Fury's suavity and persuasion to pacify George and

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induce him to act as distributor until somebody could be secured to take the place, at Rapid City.

The next day Boland made out a ranch location notice for me on the Minnekahta spring. He wrote it on a piece of the box that had been the U. S. post-office.

Along the road toward Hermosa a few miles from the stage depot lived another rugged individualist known to song, story and police records as the Sage Hen. She was the wife, or at least the traveling companion of one Dave Madison, a freighter, who when coming from Sidney to Rapid used to park her in a cabin on Lame Johnny Creek "to keep her out of trouble." He would pick her up on the return trip.

She was sitting quietly in her shack when two men whom she took to be road agents came in and demanded dinner. She said that she hadn't much but that she was willing to boil up some bacon and beans and greens to make a sort of stew, and they agreed. The bacon and beans had already been cooked, so she had only to heat them. She went out to get some dock weed and buffalo grass for "greens" and picked up from a cache near the door some miscellaneous items, including a six-shooter. When she got back, she dropped in the greens, thinned down the mixture with a pint of castor oil and served. One of her guests jumped up horrified.

But he made no protest. She poked the gun into his ribs and told him to sit down.

"You'll eat it, both of you—every last bit," she told them. "If you don't, I'll kill you and sell your horses."

They believed her.

When they had gulped down the last of the nauseous mess she ordered them to put their hands in the air while she disarmed them. She then demanded a dollar apiece "for the dinner" and got it. After that she threw their guns into the creek and ordered them out.

"And don't be so fresh next time," she yelled after them as they rode away.

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Madison was puzzled when she told him the story two weeks later. "If you knew they were road agents, why did you mess around with them?" he inquired. "Why didn't you just kill 'em and get the rewards?"

She sniffed. "Killing was too good for them," she answered cryptically.

With such a background it was to be expected that "The Gap" would have something new to offer in human relationships when the railroad crews began to fill the place up. Frank Hebert, ubiquitous prospector and close observer of what went on almost every place in the Hills, visited Buffalo Gap just before the F. E. & M. V. R.R. established a new base at Rapid City. What he found there was sufficient to provoke a comment even in one so used to the peculiarities of the West as he.

"I was surprised," he said, "at the way a lot of cow hands from some place down on the Cheyenne River were allowed to come in and take the town over."

You gathered as he explained himself that he wasn't upset by the fact that the visiting cowboys got drunk and noisy and he might have excused their shooting up the town if their timing had been right. But for some reason never explained, these cowboys worked some sort of graveyard shift and they were free to carry on their occupational pleasantries only during the the afternoon—during school hours.

"They were generally shooting at everything in sight about three-thirty o'clock, when the children were getting ready to come home," he said. "This made it dangerous and it also frightened the kids."

At first the people of Buffalo Gap were inclined to be tolerant. Boys would be boys, they admitted. And after all these hilarious visitors came in only twice a week—on Tuesdays and Thursdays. But patience ceased to be a virtue when a school-teacher reminded the mayor that all this was interfering with education.

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So, on the following Thursday "a posse of businessmen," (the words are Mr. Hebert's) was prepared for any disturbance. So when, about 3:30 P.M., three visiting cowboys started to ride around shooting at things, the posse killed all three of them.

"After that," recounted Mr. Hebert, "the kiddies weren't annoyed for quite a long time."

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# CHAPTER 10

## BIG CHIEF GOES WEST

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CUSTER STATE PARK—*The Black Hills are in the center of North America, mountain peaks rising to 7,242 feet, the highest point between the Rockies and the Alps of Switzerland. There are mountain streams, lakes, crystal caves, riding trails, fishing, boating rodeos, celebrations and fine accommodations. Custer State Park comprises 130,000 acres, free from commercialism, full of camps, parks, etc.*—CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOLDER

IT HAS been said, more in accuracy than in sorrow, that the three people most celebrated in Black Hills history were the three who had least to do with its making, to wit: Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane and Calvin Coolidge. Wild Bill did little to foster the destiny of the Golden Cities except to sit carelessly with his back to a door. Save for her much-debated role as a Florence Nightingale in buckskin pants, Martha Jane Canary spent less of her active life in Deadwood than other similar figures, like Dora DeFranne and Black Nell—or wonder-workers like Paul Bunyan. And as for Cal Coolidge—Cal Coolidge caught carefully nurtured fish.

The permanent residents of the Black Hills, the Bad Lands, and the West River country in general, willingly acknowledge their debt.

What was in the mind of Mr. Coolidge when, in 1927, he decided to avoid the customary haunts of vacationing Presidents and spent the summer in western South Dakota, has never been adequately explained. Nobody knew anything about the Black Hills in those days—that is, nobody but the Gold Bloc, the British Tin Syndicate, Gutzon Borglum and the South Dakota delegation in Congress. Nobody knew much about where they were or how you got to them.

South Dakota was still Indian country apparently, but lacking in the glamour of other Indian country as currently portrayed in the talking pictures. Even in the East, where geography has a way of ending at the

Alleghenies, South Dakota got little rating as a Western state. Its name aroused no pictures of brave women and tough men and blood and battle and glory. . . . It wasn't *West* Dakota. It was *South* Dakota, wasn't it?

George Armstrong Custer was a long time dead. An occasional gray-beard in the land had hazy memories of a great national hero known as Deadwood Dick. But Deadwood Dick had never existed save in Beadle's Dime Library. The Black Hills were a name, a misleading and badly chosen name, on a school map. Nobody now connected them with the romantic gold rush of the seventies. Even had its story been kept alive through the years it would have seemed like small change now compared with such recent treasure hunts as Teapot Dome and the Veterans' Administration.

It is generally believed that President Coolidge decided to travel a couple of thousand miles to a trout stream as the result of arguments furnished by Senator Peter Norbeck—which is very likely true. The Senator loved the Black Hills. For years he had been preaching that one day they would be a recreation ground for the people of all the Middle West. But the secret of the magic by which he conveyed this idea to the President unfortunately was still a secret at the time of his death. That is why one who follows the well-marked path of Cal over flowering mountain parks, through thundering canyons, over dinosaur tracks, up cliff walls and along the edge of singing creeks must wonder at its success.

Governor Carl Gunderson issued the formal invitation of the state to President Coolidge. He gave no sign, probably did not realize, that he was setting one of the region's most interesting precedents. South Dakota has been inviting the world to look at its wonders ever since with an aplomb made excusable by success. . . . Borglum comes to carve a mountain . . . Orvil Anderson and Albert W. Stevens answer the bidding to an ideal spot for a stratosphere flight. Several hundred guests arrive to settle down in a permanent B-29 base. London gasps as Paul Bellamy in modified Western garb offers a home to the United Nations. . . .

So, anyway, Calvin Coolidge came out to Rapid City. Black magic or not, it seems to have been a foregone conclusion. The President hadn't said what he was going to do when William Bulow of Beresford was elected governor in 1927. Bulow, who was a Democrat and not much interested in the recreational activities of Mr. Coolidge, hadn't heard about the invitation until Senator Norbeck sent him a worried

request to renew it please. Bulow did, and Mr. Coolidge accepted without further delay.

Mr. Bulow's account of his troubles from that time on has been rated by his constituents as the greatest classic of its kind since the Book of Job.

The President had been successfully invited and, as has happened frequently through the impulsive hospitality of South Dakotans, it appeared that the first move on the agenda would be to uninvite him. So far as the governor could discover there was no place to put him.

Presidents don't travel alone. He would arrive in the Hills with a couple of trainloads of secretaries, Cabinet members and their secretaries, diplomats, personal staff, secret service and the press. There were no hotel accommodations that might do except those at the State Game Lodge in Custer Park and the Game Lodge was already under lease for the season to a private operator.

The governor explained the situation to the lessee who agreed to move. All he asked was compensation for personal loss on his contract. No appropriation had been passed for such emergencies and Bulow had to borrow from half the department heads in Pierre to raise the funds. He was ready, however, when the President's couriers, tasters and billeting officers arrived to look things over.

They were pleased with the Game Lodge in the lovely wooded canyon of Squaw Creek, as well they might be. They sent in their reports and received an O.K. from the White House. They went down to Rapid to take over the high school as a business office and arrange for the billeting of sundry clerks, technicians, minor officials and police. Bulow was able to breathe once more—for a little while.

About two weeks before the date set for the President's arrival, the governor received a visit from Colonel Starling of the secret service. The colonel was displeased and threatened to send the President back to Plymouth, Vermont, or wherever he spent his vacations before 1927.

The trouble was this. Mr. Coolidge would have to make the thirty-two-mile journey between his living quarters at the Game Lodge and the executive offices in Rapid City every day. The road from Rapid City to Hermosa had been graded and graveled and was theoretically, at least, passable in all sorts of weather. The road from Hermosa up into the hills, however, was something else again. There were twelve miles of it without gravel and stretches of clay that might be bottomless if wet.

"This road must be surfaced so that it will not be affected by weather,"

the colonel declared. "Otherwise it will be necessary for the President to cancel his visit."

"Of course we'll surface the road," declared the governor. "It's a mere nothing."

He called in the state highway engineer, who took a dim view of the proceedings.

"That road has never been surveyed," he said. "It will take about a week to survey it. Then it will have to be graded. If we hurry we can get that part of the job done in a month. But then the grade will have to settle before we can put a surface on it. I'm afraid we can't get the gravel on until sometime after President Coolidge is back in Washington."

By way of comment Governor Bulow called up a contractor whom he has described only as "an Irish friend of mine in Beresford." Work on the Hermosa-Game Lodge highway started the next afternoon. The contractor, unacquainted with the logic of state-house protocol, filled up holes and ruts in the existing road and covered the surface with gravel as he went along. The construction was finished two days before the President's arrival. But the preliminary work such as surveying and mapping was still proceeding well along in the fall.

The governor met the President and made his welcoming speech at Pierre. He accompanied Mr. Coolidge on a tour of the town and escorted him out to the Black Hills with an interchange of half a dozen sentences such as "What is the population of Pierre? How do you enforce the prohibition laws in South Dakota? What are we doing down here in this dust?" Mr. Bulow, who had never associated much with Presidents, began to get the idea that they were hard to talk to. He wondered if Mr. Coolidge was going to like the Game Lodge. He wondered if he was ever going to find out what Mr. Coolidge liked.

He wasn't the only one concerned with the whims of Calvin Coolidge. Alex Johnson, the North Western Railway's vice-president in charge of operations, was waiting anxiously on the Pierre platform that day, unwilling to leave until he could see the Presidential train rolling westward on a track from which it couldn't be turned off before reaching Rapid City.

"We've had a time with him," he mentioned afterward to the governor. "We had this whole trip set up six weeks ago . . . all the way from Chicago to Rapid. Everybody in the North Western system has been working like a dog to make sure that nothing could possibly go wrong.

"Then at the last minute he takes a notion he won't come out this

way, through Huron and Pierre. He's going to come by way of Mitchell so he can get a look at the grave of some distant relative who's been there for twenty-five or thirty years—just a sort of all-inclusive tour. Somebody talked him out of it—probably Pete Norbeck. He's unpredictable."

The impresarios of the grand tour continued to worry about the President's possible reaction to the Black Hills. But they might have spared themselves. Coolidge was the sort of armchair traveler who had never until recent years been more than a couple of hundred miles from the spot where he was born. In a succession of political journeyings since the death of Warren Harding he had gone from one center of population to another—from one speakers' platform in a vast assembly hall to other platforms in other halls, all exactly alike. Never had the chance been offered him to look at this strange disorderly world he had read about as a boy.

Like it?

Johnson, looking back along the train from the door of the baggage car as it rattled out of Fort Pierre and onto the prairie heard the "Yip! yip!" of a hundred cowboys who in gaudy new shirts and ceremonial hair pants had come charging across the plain to gallop a few noisy dusty miles alongside the President's car.

Like it?

Of course he was going to like it.

He did.

William Bulow of Beresford may have known very little about the ways of princes and presidents but he had an instinctive feeling for social graces and a fine regard for showmanship. Spring comes late in the high canyons of the Harney Peak region and you are likely to find plenty of snow around the Game Lodge in April. So there seems to be some foundation for the legend of the solitary forest ranger who rode out of a near blizzard onto a wind-swept flat above Squaw Creek and saw a lot of men with transits, targets and snow shovels.

"And what," he inquired, "might you be doing here?"

"We," replied a seeming Eskimo who apparently was foreman of the little group, "we are putting in a golf course, which is just what this country needs."

"Why?" demanded the puzzled ranger.

"So the President of the United States can relax on it after a hard day

at the White House," replied the Eskimo and the ranger rode away muttering in his beard.

This hastily constructed playground is still to be seen by anyone who takes the time to ride up to the mountain meadow behind the corrals. Because rattlesnakes dwelt in them and they were likely to trip up unwary horses, the holes have been filled up and the greens now combine to make a beautiful natural park no different from dozens to be found in the region. And that is a great pity because it prevents investigation of another legend: that all the greens sloped down toward the cup, like the famous hole-in-one course of the comedian Joe Cook.

Nobody ever played golf on this mountaintop except President Coolidge or his invited guests. There were no spectators' galleries or press parties. And Cal, of course, never said much about anything. In sports costume topped by his newly acquired ten-gallon hat, he would get into a Model T capable of negotiating the trail and ride up into the belt of murmuring pines. Some time later he would come back and there were no post mortems. . . . Which seems to establish a pretty good precedent for golf players everywhere.

However, if mystery surrounded Mr. Coolidge's golf, there was little or none about his trout fishing. He caught fish in large quantities and with a variety of techniques, and the newsreels spread the evidence on screens throughout the land. Sometimes these pictures showed him in company with an honored guest, sometimes with one of the secret-service men who guarded his person from souvenir salesmen and hostile Sioux Indians. More often he was posed alone. Never, through some unfortunate oversight, did the cameramen present a glimpse of the man who, overnight, had made Cal Coolidge the greatest fisherman since Isaak Walton, to wit Governor William Bulow.

Which, possibly, was just as well. Calvin Coolidge died long before he had a chance to find out what had been done to him.

Maybe there are a few trout streams around Beresford, although Union County is fertile flatland about four hundred miles from a mountain. At any rate William Bulow brought to the governorship a fair knowledge of trout, not the least important feature of which was that trout are hard to catch.

It seemed likely that Calvin Coolidge might be an expert fly fisherman. He just didn't look like one. The governor's inquiries confirmed his fears and he was seriously troubled.

Something would have to be done to amuse the President during his vacation and he couldn't play golf all the time. Reports from the East



Hangman's Hill, Rapid City landmark.





Haunt of the elite in Rapid City's early cow period.



Madame Canutson, female bullwhacker.

indicated that he could ride a horse but wasn't enthusiastic about it. On the entertainment program of the Game Lodge there remained trout fishing—and he didn't know anything about that, either.

"His fishing," said Mr. Bulow finally, "will have to be encouraged."

So, one evening about a week before Mr. Coolidge was due to arrive, workmen came into the state park with iron stakes and rolls of chicken wire. They put a weir across Squaw Creek under the bridge about a mile above the Lodge. When they had finished it, they put in another under a second bridge two miles downstream. The governor surveyed this work and found it good. He went to a telephone and called a friend in charge of operations in the government fish hatchery at Spearfish.

"There are some veteran fish here that ought to serve your purpose quite well," said the friend. "Of course they are a little flabby. They're not young any more and they don't get much exercise and their diet for years has been ground meat, liver and such stuff. But they aren't coy and they aren't afraid of anything."

In the dark of the night the state game warden and a couple of trusted assistants arrived at the hatchery with a truck. Before morning the aged trout, after a lifetime spent in tanks, were swimming about between the weirs in Squaw Creek—the only creek they had ever seen.

Cal Coolidge arrived and posed for some photographs that got wide circulation: Mr. Coolidge with a sour smile in a cowboy hat; Mr. Coolidge looking sheepish in chaps; a stern-faced Mr. Coolidge in the war feathers of the Sioux; a pained-looking Mr. Coolidge holding a fishpole and a fish—the first of a series.

The fishpole picture provoked discussion all over the country. What kind of rod was it? Where did he get it? Was that a blur in the negative or did the President actually use worms for bait to catch trout?

It has been generally agreed that he did use worms for bait, just as it was generally agreed that no trout would ever be stupid enough to bite on it. There was stormy criticism from sportsmen (Democrats) and earnest defense by conservationists, etc. (Republicans). But all this conversation served no good purpose and led to no conclusions. What if Calvin Coolidge did bait his hook with angleworms instead of hand-made flies? He caught fish. He caught a lot of fish. And it may just as well be stated that he would have caught just as big a lot of fish with a specially designed fly or a spoon hook or his hat. After three or four days in a strange brook with no food except what they contrived to get for themselves, the pampered trout from Spearfish were more than willing to look into anything that might be offered.

After a week, the game warden's trusted associates took to dumping a little ground meat and liver into the brook now and then to keep them from hopping out onto the road. This concession toward their traditions failed utterly to change their attitude toward a hook.

Governor Bulow had feared at first that he might be unable to keep the brook sufficiently supplied with foolish fish. But the distinguished guest saved him further worry on that score. The word had been passed that the two miles of creek between the bridges had been "reserved for the sole use of the President and others having his special invitation." And Cal turned out to be a true fisherman in that he wanted to be alone in the great silences. In a few days he had become one of the most amazing trout catchers in the history of the Black Hills. There seemed no reason why such an honor should be shared.

So Mr. Coolidge was quite happy and so, for that matter, was Governor Bulow until one day when a secretary came around to deliver the President's special invitation to dinner. It was a sort of command performance that he couldn't very well escape. The next evening saw him in the private dining room at the Game Lodge, sitting opposite Mr. Coolidge. The meal was less trying than he had expected. Mrs. Coolidge was charming. Her husband was showing signs of animation. Mr. Bulow, who had watched the soup whisked in and whisked out without mishap, began to feel more at ease. . . . And then they brought on the fish course. He noted the unusual rotundity of the exhibits at once. These were his own, his personal contribution to Mr. Coolidge's entertainment—liver-fed trout, tame, amusing and virtually inedible.

"I've seen you before," he observed to the fish nearest him.

"What you say?" inquired the President.

"I said I hadn't seen fish like this before," observed Bulow. "We don't have trout like that in Beresford."

"They come from right here in the park," explained the President. "I caught them myself."

# CHAPTER 11

## CALVIN IN THE MOUNTAINS

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*RUSHMORE—Carlyle once said to Holman Hunt, "I'm only a poor man but I would give one third of what I possess for a vertible contemporaneous representation of Jesus Christ." Had those carvers of marble chiseled a faithful statue of the Son of Man as He called Himself and shown what manner of man He was like and what the features of his sorrow marked face were, I, for one, would have thanked the sculptor with all the gratitude of my heart for that portrait as one of the most precious heirlooms of all ages . . . !—GUTZON BORGLUM, 1941*

OVER beyond Keystone, Gutzon Borglum was getting ready to blast the top off Mount Rushmore as a preliminary to the carving of the four great stone faces. The audacious concept of what was to be called The Shrine of Democracy was going forward, haltingly, perhaps, and a little uncertainly, but definitely forward. Pictures of Borglum's models were being widely circulated in the rotogravure—more than ever now that the President of the United States was attracting attention to them by his stay in the Black Hills. Public interest was beginning to show signs of life. And it occurred to the sculptor, who was then (and always) the great showman, that it might be a good idea to have a fifth great stone face—to wit, Mr. Coolidge—dedicate his mountain.

Mr. Bulow, in his account of the proceedings, appears to have been a little annoyed with Mr. Borglum. The great artist, he charges, wanted to have a dedication ceremony every time anybody of sufficient public importance arrived in the Hills. Certainly the progress of the work was liberally punctuated with solemn rites and patriotic oratory, not only up to but after the much-publicized occasion of Franklin D. Roosevelt's arrival in 1936. But it is significant that none of the great personages invited to appear at these ceremonies ever refused. Cal Coolidge set a precedent for them in August 1927.

In the Black Hills you never have to turn time back very far to discover a pioneer age and a primeval wilderness. On the day of his death in 1933 Calvin Coolidge would never have recognized the scene of the Rushmore unveiling of 1927. The great silences that he had loved were gone and the mystery of dark, uninhabited canyons, and even the changeless mountains were changing.

In 1927 Keystone was just a place at the end of the dirt road out of Rockerville, a mining camp sparsely populated by old-timers with the customary high hopes. Up on its cliff perched the weathered buildings of the Holy Terror, shut down and filled with water these many years. The general store with prohibition had succeeded the last of half a dozen saloons as a social center, and there came the miners fresh from the creeks with specimens of jet and spodumene and similar trash. Now and again Frank Hebert, most coherent of the old prospectors—and the most vocal—passed through town into and out of the nowhere looking for tin. It was there, he declared. The machinations of the British Malayan Syndicate proved it. . . . And the collapse of the vast Harney Peak Tin Corporation didn't signify anything.

He was hard to convince.

Over against the crumbling edge of Battle Creek one of the reincarnations of the noteworthy McDonald Hotel leaned somewhat forlornly into the weather. It still housed a few people—mostly engineers and lawyers interested in getting gold, by one process or another, out of the Holy Terror. The place still had a reputation for good short-order meals. But that wasn't what attracted most of the transients who came to peer through the dining-room door. What interested the infrequent sight-seer was the weird specialty of the house—the biggest lazy Susan in the world.

It is gone now. It was destroyed in the burning of the hotel—or, as it was then more popularly known, the boardinghouse—many years ago and so far as can be determined nobody has ever gone to the trouble of building a duplicate of it . . . which is a great pity. Nobody told Calvin Coolidge about it because they didn't want to distract his attention from the day's great event. But it was the sort of thing that would have interested him. It was a triumph of practical engineering.

Back in the early nineties when Keystone was thriving, John McDonald and his wife, unable to get domestic help for their hotel, invented and installed what they called a "revolving table." It was a round affair, nine feet in diameter, capable of seating about twenty-five people at once. Actually, the table was stationary. The revolving part was a sec-

ond table, seven and a half feet in diameter, pivoted in the center on top of it.

With such equipment the serving of a meal was simple. All the food was piled up in platters around the edge of the rotating shelf. The diners helped themselves to what they wanted as it went by. The graybeards of the community say that there were few accidents.

Keystone had other signs of progress—such as a magnetic jig which would have separated metallic tin from the crushed ore without water, chemicals or mercury, if the inventor could have discovered some way to make a magnet pick up tin instead of iron. Another chemist up on the trail to Hill City had discovered a process for aging adolescent hooch. He put his product in green barrels which he hoisted to the tops of lofty pines, where it got a beneficial shaking in the breeze and wasn't easily detectable by prohibition officers. . . . Science and industry were flourishing in this dusty camp long before Coolidge came—or Borglum. But that hadn't kept the community from getting pretty isolated.

There was a bad road into the place from Rapid City by way of Rockerville. There was a worse one out of it along Battle Creek to Hermosa. There was a dim route along the Burlington spur to Hill City. But only a horse trail led to Gutzon Borglum's ivory tower, and that barely recognizable as such.

Keystone, never a cow town, supported very few horses. The journey of Cal to the mountaintop with his official entourage, visiting firemen and their sisters and their cousins and their aunts seemed likely to produce complications. And indeed it did.

Calvin Coolidge had a horse. Somebody had led it in from a ranch on Spring Creek long enough in advance to give it a chance to recuperate from its long trip. The President was dressed for the occasion in a neat blue business suit, ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots, despite which he turned out to be a fair rider. He got through the expedition without mishap or, apparently, any minor annoyance.

Several thousand other people, including the governor, didn't have horses. They walked. August 10, 1927, was sunny and hot. The path through steep and crooked gullies was dry and dusty.

Up the mountainside moved the President and an escort of cavalry and a few of the local citizenry who had thoughtfully provided themselves with mounts. On foot came a motley collection of blanket Indians, actors in historic costumes, newsreel crews staggering under their cameras, grimly approving members of the official family, sweating correspondents and hundreds upon hundreds of patriots, politicians and

plain people who had come just for the walk. The dust got thicker as the going got more difficult. But eventually all of the procession got up to the foot of the granite wall that Borglum had chosen for his work. And they spread out around the speakers' stand to witness a rite which, despite its oddities and annoyances, seems more and more impressive and significant with the passing years.

"This memorial," said Mr. Coolidge, "will crown the height of land between the Rocky Mountains and the Atlantic seaboard, where coming generations may view it for all time. . . ." And a considerable percentage of the spectators doubted that his view of the future was at all clear. ". . . We have come to dedicate a cornerstone that was laid by the hand of the Almighty. On this towering wall of Rushmore, in the heart of the Black Hills, is to be inscribed a memorial which will represent some of the outstanding events of American history by portraying with suitable inscription the features of four of our presidents, laid on by the hand of a great artist in sculpture."

The rest of the dedication was in much the same vein and phrasing. But something, the raising of the flags on the top of Mount Rushmore, or the quiet interest of the thousands who had made the pilgrimage to the mountaintop, or a prevision of what Borglum was actually going to do with this hoary old rock had stirred Cal's imagination. He spoke, as always, with a voice of twanging banjos but with a sincerity and enthusiasm that somehow made his listeners forget his costume. More than one correspondent reported reluctantly that he had made the best speech of his life.

Governor Bulow by this time had got fairly well used to Calvin Coolidge. But it was fated that he would never get used to Borglum. What seems to have impressed the governor most about the proceedings was not the President's speech but the sculptor's.

It was part of Borglum's original plan for the memorial to have a short history of the United States engraved on the mountainside below the figures. And in his speech, Mr. Bulow observes, he "actually had the fortitude to authorize" the President to undertake the writing of the script. Mr. Coolidge, however, saw nothing out of order or presumptuous in the commission. Despite the fact that he had never been widely commended for his prose works he agreed to write a few hundred words in letters three feet high for Rushmore's imperishable record.

That concluded the day's exercises and the party plodded back down the hill to Keystone.

Senator Bulow is authority for the report that Mr. Coolidge actually wrote a text for the historical inscription but that Mr. Borglum found it unsuitable. This, Mr. Bulow remarks, was after Mr. Coolidge's term expired.

The President returned to the Game Lodge where he stayed the rest of the summer. He had made some history with his famous cryptogram: "I do not choose to run." But none of his other official acts in South Dakota occasioned any stir. Calvin Coolidge seemed to be, and probably was, having a good time in the sort of environment he had never seen before in his life. With no campaign for re-election in prospect he had plenty of time to go about dedicating boy scout camps, inspecting mountains or attending services at the Congregational Church in Hermosa—all of which has been duly recorded in a series of carved signs four feet square.

He had intended to get back to Washington somewhere around the first week of July. But September had come and snow was threatening before he finally told the railroad officials that they could bring his train around. One of his last acts at the Game Lodge was to call Governor Bulow and ask for his bill. The governor declined to present any.

"You don't invite a friend to your house and ask him to pay for his board and room," he said. "You will always be welcome here, Mr. President. Come back again."

"I shall come back again in any case," replied Mr. Coolidge, and apparently meant it. But, of course, he never did come back; nor did Mrs. Coolidge, whose name they had given to Squaw Creek. Possibly they felt that they had done enough for the community . . . on which point the Black Hills-Bad Lands Association would probably be in full agreement.

It took a separate automobile to carry to the railroad station the sundry presents that the friendly natives had showered on the President during his stay. There is no record that he ever wore his Sioux war bonnet or his odds and ends of cowboy regalia after he got back to Washington. Like so many souvenirs they had only a temporary usefulness. But anyway he took them to the baggage car ahead along with polished rocks, deer antlers, petrified wood, embroidered shirts, plaster statues of cowboys, oil paintings, Indian beadwork, and jars of preserved boysenberries. One memento of his visit was carefully cherished and, it is said, was kept with his personal effects—a plaque of polished walnut



on which was mounted an extra-large stuffed trout. Beneath it was a brass tablet bearing the inscription: CAUGHT BY CALVIN COOLIDGE, CUSTER PARK, S. D., JULY 20, 1927.

Considering the President's habits in such matters it seems hardly likely that he arranged for the taxidermy himself. On the other hand the status of a stuffed fish as a present is difficult to determine. The best authorities say that Governor Bulow didn't have anything to do with it. And perhaps he didn't. The mystery of it all has made interesting material to mix up with the rest of the Coolidge legend in the Black Hills, folklore that will never fade and grows more piquantly lovely with each retelling.

# CHAPTER 12

## FOUR FACES

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RUSHMORE—*Travel at Mount Rushmore National Memorial during the month of August, 1948, totalled 169,337 visitors, an increase of 23 per cent over last August. The total to date for the travel year is 483,786 and before the end of the year will probably reach half a million.*

—*Custer County Chronicle*, September 9, 1948

THE history of the colossal carvings on Mount Rushmore begins properly at Stone Mountain, Georgia, where Gutzon Borglum was starting to carve out the giants of the Confederacy. The newspapers had been filled with the story of this spectacular undertaking. And a photomontage of Borglum's models and the granite mountain had made a breathtaking picture for the rotogravure.

No lost cause had ever had a monument like this. Lee and his generals following the flag down the steep mountainside were taking a stature in art that they had already achieved in literature. And presently they would be demigods captive in stone, heroic figures such as the world had never seen before, even in ancient Egypt.

This was no mere dream. Borglum had designed a Confederate half dollar which was struck by the National Government to honor the warriors once styled "rebels," and auctioned at a premium to raise funds for the memorial. Property rights on Stone Mountain had been assigned to the memorial association for the purposes of the work. The Daughters of the Confederacy reported that a construction fund of more than a million dollars had already been accumulated. Gutzon Borglum had taken up permanent residence close to the project and the dynamiting of the granite wall of the butte had begun. The last march of Robert E. Lee was on its way to a stony glory. . . .

However, as everybody now knows, the Confederate memorial was never to be finished—not by Borglum. The sculptor had a bitter dis-

agreement with the executive committee of the Stone Mountain Memorial Association and he resigned. He obliterated all the work he had done on the mountain, destroyed his models and took a train for New York. You might rate all this the sort of fiasco justified by a sort of artistic exhibitionism save for one or two factors: great and startling ideas are a long time dying and people with imagination are not easily discouraged.

Out in South Dakota, Doane Robinson, the state historian, heard regretfully that Mr. Borglum had left Atlanta and his Stone Mountain project, and he tried to think up some plan whereby so daring an effort might be saved for posterity. Along about 1924 he got in touch with Mr. Borglum.

Mr. Robinson was a historian of great erudition and, in ordinary matters, a person of sound practicality. In his work on the chronology of South Dakota and the old Dakota Territory there was virtually nothing that he didn't find out about public finance and the allotment of state funds for one thing and another, and the troubles that beset appropriation measures. As a permanent resident of Pierre, the capital, he got to know generations of politicians and if he had learned anything about them it was the fact that they are little given to abstruse philosophy and make no allowances for spiritual values in public works.

One might think that, in the circumstances, Mr. Robinson might have left the country's prospects for nicely carved mountains strictly in the hands of the Stone Mountain Association or others more definitely concerned. But it is one of the characteristics of the Black Hills that you don't give up a favored project because it's difficult or even because it's impossible.

Nobody in this region has ever been very much awed by any individual or any individual's ideas. That's why you have Presidents of the United States coming to visit the Game Lodge, stratosphere fliers trying for world's records out of Spring Creek Canyon, Paul Bellamy offering a new home to the United Nations. Money doesn't seem to mean much either. There is a great and true saying that the Lord will provide.

Doane Robinson knew quite well that the cost of mountain carving was quite likely to run into millions of dollars. He didn't have access to any great sums of money. And he saw no likelihood that he ever would have. But he had interested Mr. Borglum. And now all he had to do was interest the people of South Dakota.

He talked to anybody and everybody whether he thought they might be interested or not. A good-roads association gave him some encourage-

ment. A group of high-school youngsters wanted to help finance the undertaking with a dime collection. . . . Anyway, everybody in the West River country began to hear about the idea and Robinson began to hear from people in the Black Hills who were far from enthusiastic.

Nobody in 1925 had any thought of making a national shrine out of Mount Rushmore. Not one person out of a thousand in the Hills had ever seen the place. Probably fewer than that could call it by name. It was back somewhere behind Keystone—if any expert had been asked to locate it. It was in that gloomy bourne “off the wagon road,” and nobody would have believed that a sculptor might go looking for work so deep in the hinterlands as that. The supposition was that some fine-looking lump of rock along what was then known as “the highway” would be used as raw material—very likely the Needles. And come what might, the people of the Black Hills wanted the Needles to be left alone.

Borglum himself stopped a lot of this resentment when he came to the Hills in 1925. He looked at the Needles and said they were safe. He wasn't interested in their artistic merit. He wanted a considerable block of stone that would be free from flaws or cracks. He thought some of the domes south of Harney Peak might do, and the South Dakota delegation in Congress got permission from the government to carve a mountaintop in the National Forest. The South Dakota legislature acquiesced in appointing a commission to carry on the work of carving the figures of the country's great heroes as a national memorial. But the bill creating the commission carried no appropriation whatever.

Borglum toured the Hills late in 1925 with Senator Norbeck and literally crawled up and down every slope in the central area where granite might be exposed. Some of the party tried to keep him to the roads—at least to the logging trails. But Mr. Borglum was another student of the local scene who had heard about the reward for building better mousetraps. Who cared about a road? Build the memorial and people would start making lots of roads!

Forty years before, a young lawyer named Charles E. Rushmore had come out to the Hills to look over some property for a client interested in a tin promotion. His researches brought him to Keystone which at the time was reasonably boisterous. The young lawyer was good company and made a lot of friends. When the time came eventually for him to take a ride down Battle Creek to Hermosa and catch a stage for Sidney, most of the camp turned out.

“Well,” he said, “I hope to be back some day. I don't think I'll ever

forget an inch of the ground around here. But before I go I'd like to get set straight on one thing that's been puzzling me. What's the name of that mountain right over there to the south?"

His wagon driver took a quick look and spoke first. "Well," he said, "It's funny your asking that. Up to now that peak didn't have any name. But now its name is Mount Rushmore." And all the miners cheered.

"It's a fine-looking mountain," said Mr. Rushmore as he climbed into the wagon. . . .

"It's a fine-looking mountain," said Gutzon Borglum. "Let's hear what the geologists have to say about it."

Despite the location of a site far removed from human ken and some open hostility in a part of the Dakota press that apparently didn't like Borglum on general principles, the West River country began to show some interest. In 1926 the people of the Black Hills underwrote a fund of \$25,000. Gifts of \$5,000 each were received from Mr. Rushmore, Senator Coleman DuPont, the Chicago and North Western Railway, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, the Homestake Mine. The *Dakota Farmer* sent a donation of \$1,500. The Northwestern Public Service Company of Huron contributed the use of an efficient power plant.

Cal Coolidge gave his accolade to the project when he dedicated it in 1927. As one of his last official acts as President he signed the law creating the Rushmore National Memorial Commission and providing for a Federal appropriation in February 1929. Everything looked bright and cheerful on that day. The project was certainly ages farther along than it had been a couple of years ago when Doane Robinson began to bore his friends with the discussion of it. The future was glorious enough to buoy the hopes of anybody, let alone a volatile artist. But the rock being blasted from Rushmore's wrinkled face was hardly noticeable. No sculptors were available for this job—only hard-rock men who had been doing their previous carving half a mile deep in the Homestake. The work was going more slowly than had been calculated. Last week's supplies had been late. Monday had been the coldest day in years of Black Hills history. Today—well it was like any other day—new kinds of trouble every hour. And that's the way it was going to be for nearly twenty years: the future was always going to be exciting and glorious while the present was going to be pettily annoying, unpredictable and discouraging.

The first directorate—the Mount Harney Memorial Association, authorized to “carve a memorial in heroic figures”—had consisted of Senator Peter Norbeck, Governor (later Senator) William J. Bulow, the original proponent of the plan, Doane Robinson, and other South Dakotans. The new Mount Rushmore National Memorial Commission named by the President in 1929 was local only in its title: John A. Boland, Rapid City, South Dakota; Charles R. Crane, New York; Joseph S. Cullinan, Houston, Texas; C. M. Day, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; D. B. Gurney, Yankton, South Dakota; Hale Holden, Chicago; Frank O. Lowden, Oregon, Illinois; Julius Rosenwald, Chicago; Fred W. Sargent, Evanston, Illinois; and Mrs. Lorine Jones Spoonts, Corpus Christi, Texas.

Mr. Cullinan was elected first president of the commission and at a session in the White House on invitation of President Coolidge on June 6, 1929, Mr. Boland was made chairman of the executive committee. He was to occupy that chair a long time.

Another organization was formed in 1930 to operate under the parent commission in looking after matters not directly connected with the carving of the memorial. Its functions included advertising, fund raising, sale of memberships, management of concessions, maintenance of the park area, and publicity. It was called the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Society of the Black Hills and had an impressive membership roll: John Hays Hammond, mining engineer; Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War under President Wilson; John N. Garner, Vice-President of the United States; Julius Rosenwald, American merchant and philanthropist; Sewell L. Avery, U. S. Gypsum Company; Mary Garden, American operatic soprano; Walter Dill Scott, president of Northwestern University; Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1931; Vilhjalmur Stefansson, arctic explorer; and others.

The society's board of trustees was made up of Paul E. Bellamy, John A. Boland, Mrs. Gutzon Borglum, Lincoln Borglum, Francis Case, Fred C. Christopherson, Miss Nina Cullinan, George E. Flavin, Mrs. William Fowden, Mrs. Peter Norbeck, Robert E. Driscoll, Sr., Eugene C. Eppley, Mrs. Frank M. Lewis and William Williamson. Walter H. Johnson was appointed treasurer and K. F. Olsen secretary. The commission comes to life only as needed and at this time it functions chiefly in the care and maintenance of the park and its concessions.

Gutzon Borglum had stated casually that somebody would beat a path to his door. And somebody did, only much more rapidly than even

he could have expected. The somebody was Senator (affectionately known as "Pete") Norbeck. There will always be some argument concerning the status of colossal art and the selection of subjects and the placing of the group and other abstruse matters. But nobody in his right mind is going to argue about what the so-called shrine of democracy did to open up the Black Hills.

John Boland, who for a couple of decades stood alongside Borglum as a tireless driver, exhorter, bursar and right hand, was one of the few people in America who had ever heard of Rushmore and his mountain when the sculptor came to the Hills. He had put in a great deal of his boyhood in the Keystone district and had penetrated into the wilderness over a logging trail. None knew better than he the utter isolation of Mount Rushmore from spots no more than two miles distant.

Today the maps show Mount Rushmore on a direct line from Rapid City to other points by way of Keystone. But don't deceive yourself with the notion that there is any tradition behind this arrangement. The south road out of Rapid went not to Keystone but to an intermediate camp called Rockerville—the hill over which you leave Rapid on U. S. 16 is still called Rockerville Hill. The road to what remained of Rockerville was merely a pair of ruts in 1924. The link between there and Keystone was euphemistically known as a horse trail and some horses actually made the trip over it. But the best route from Keystone to Rapid was down the creek to Hermosa and thence north over the prairie.

Into this untrammelled domain came the South Dakota State Highway Commission to reel out mile upon mile of unbelievable roads. Presently an automobile highway came over the mountains from Rapid City to Keystone and moved on in a beautiful curve to a forest clearing behind the studio on Mount Rushmore.

By 1930, when the faces on the cliff were beginning to take shape, there was increasing evidence that the automobile had come to stay. Thousands of cars were leaping across the once trackless prairie hundreds and hundreds of miles. The isolation of Mount Rushmore was definitely finished.

South Dakota's highway appropriation wasn't the greatest in the world in 1929. The way was long and weary and except in the hundred-mile oval of the Black Hills, the West River country didn't promise much revenue. Senator Norbeck, who had fathered the park system in South Dakota, knew all of that. So did Paul Bellamy who had bought

some busses for a transportation system and was hoping to find some place to run them through the Hills. There was also Charles E. Smith, a highway engineer. All that need be said about Mr. Smith is that he gave this district some of the most astounding roads in the United States if not in the world. Short of funds he relied on his own ingenuity. Short of funds, he had to.

Iron Mountain Road, with its two lanes sometimes half a mile apart, is never forgotten by anybody who drives over it. Your motorist plods along for miles through silent forests of quaking aspen or birch or ponderosa pine. The road twists and rises and dips with virtually no clearance between tree trunks, no human habitation anywhere at hand. No help in sight. He shakes off this veil to find himself on the rim of a mountain and he is amazed to find that everything has come out all right. Most likely he will talk of his adventure forever—and with small blame.

Yet, no matter where he comes from in the flatlands, he is in considerably less danger than he would be in his own town on Main Street of a Saturday afternoon. The road is narrow because that way it could be more easily leveled on a severe slope. But its deliberate curves hold down speed and dented fenders are few.

The lanes are marked one way and laid out far apart for reasons of economical construction. It is much easier and cheaper to grade two narrow roads at different levels than one wide one at a single level. The mysterious kinship with the babes in the wood is purely incidental.

Iron Mountain Road, which now carries the label of No. 16, proceeds eighteen miles from Keystone to the State Game Lodge, through a constantly changing mountain panorama. The area it traverses was given its name because of some traces of iron ore in the region. The deposits have never been considered extensive enough to make mining profitable but there is at least one legend about the road that ranks with any sagas that came out of the gold camps. . . .

When the surveyors started to lay out this highway they found themselves crossing property privately owned or under lease. And as sometimes happens when a rancher sees a surveying instrument the price of a right of way between Keystone and Squaw Creek began to get exorbitant. There looked to be good reason for abandoning the project altogether, but Messrs. Norbeck, Bellamy and Smith went into a closed conference and emerged with a novel but practical idea. With some assistance, they filed on a series of mineral claims extending "sixty feet



on either side of a line hereinafter described," and the "line hereinafter described" was providentially the same line that they had laid out for the road.

When you see a man with a shovel patching the pavement of No. 16 nowadays, don't ever think he's repairing a road. He's doing assessment work on his iron mine.

One of the features of the highway came quite by accident. Construction was started from the south end and presently struck a mountain that had to be tunneled. The hole was surveyed with no plan save to keep it in line with the approach already built. But when the miners finally broke through to daylight on the opposite side they found themselves staring squarely into the half-completed face of George Washington.

"That is an idea worth repeating," declared Norbeck. So the two remaining tunnels were cut at the same angle, framing the whole memorial with a showmanship worthy of Gutzon Borglum himself.

Another novelty of the mountain climb is the ingenious system whereby the highway is carried a couple of hundred feet up a steep slope without expensive switchbacks. Smith and his cohorts built spiral ramps on log trestles—"pigtails," they are called locally—and gained what altitude he needed with virtually no forward movement at all.

A highway similar to the Iron Mountain adventure but if anything a little more rugged runs down behind the carvings, and angles west and a little north over thrilling grades to Horsethief Lake. From that point it meanders up and down to Palmer Gulch and the Hill City—Sylvan Lake Road, Number 85A. The separation between lanes along this route ought to make it theoretically the widest in the country. Mountain ridges intervene, and deep valleys and dense forests. You part company with the strip on your left as you come to the first one-way sign west of Horsethief Lake and then you don't see it again for miles and miles.

It is not a fast road. You may be the better part of an hour completing its twelve miles. But it offers a style of scenery that doesn't often come with automobile highways. The transportation is rough but it's safe and it leads you as far out of this world as you are ever likely to get with your eyes open.

Federal funds for the construction of the monument had been appropriated on a share-and-share basis, which is to say the government agreed to match, dollar for dollar, the money collected by the state. At no time

during the work was there any large balance in the treasury and John Boland found himself, as executive secretary and business director of the enterprise, almost continuously in trouble.

He had many an argument with the sculptor, for whom he never lost a warm friendliness. Borglum, driving ahead on what was probably the biggest work that a man with a chisel and mallet had ever undertaken, could not brook delay. He had the great artist's calm disregard for money. If he needed a machine or a new cable rig, he needed it immediately whether there was any money in the treasury or not. The officials of the National Park Service were seldom aware of the urgency of the situation. And somewhere between the irresistible force and the immovable body stood Boland. He was still there when Gutzon Borglum's heart failed in March 1941.

Despite the continual struggle for funds the monument took shape rapidly after 1930. It was completed under the direction of Lincoln Borglum, the sculptor's son, in the fall of 1941. The entire cost, including salaries and all expenses of building and carving, had totaled only \$900,000.

The head of Washington was unveiled in 1930 with J. S. Cullinan, chairman of the Memorial Commission, presiding. President Franklin D. Roosevelt unveiled the Jefferson head in 1936. Under the auspices of Chairman Williamson and U. S. Senator Edward R. Burke of Nebraska on Constitution Day, September 17, 1937, Lincoln's head was revealed. The upper part of the face of Theodore Roosevelt was unveiled by Governor Harlan Bushfield as part of South Dakota's Golden Jubilee Celebration in 1939.

The sculptured faces of the four Presidents are approximately sixty feet from chin to forehead. The figures completed on the same scale would be four hundred and sixty-five feet high. A local statistician has figured out that Washington's nose is longer than the height of the face of the Egyptian Sphinx. The height of his total figure would be taller than the Washington Monument. . . . But to anyone who looks at the monument these figures are of no consequence. What makes the carving unique is not its size but its symmetry.

When Borglum started to blast away the rock along the lines projected from his model of Washington—the first figure—he was able to get within a foot of the planned surface with dynamite. The remaining twelve inches of rock had to be hacked and hammered away with laborious handwork.

Within a year he had worked out blasting techniques that permitted

a much closer approach. And toward the end, he was dynamiting to within a couple of inches of the finished work. He had cut corners so efficiently that the total cost of granite removal was less than two dollars a ton.

And as for the statues, much to the surprise of quite a lot of people, they came out all right. Gutzon Borglum turned out to have been at least as good an engineer as he was a sculptor. Despite the fact that he was always working at a distance of a few feet on a great stone face that would be seen from a distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile, there was never any deviation from the model unless he planned it that way. From the studio near at hand or from the distant tunnels or from a peak five miles away you will see the four Presidents gazing at you with the same majestic calm, in perfect position and free from even a hint of distortion.

Declared Gutzon Borglum in 1925:

I want, somewhere in America on or near the Rockies, the backbone of the Continent so far removed from succeeding, selfish, coveting civilizations, a few feet of stone that carries the likenesses, the dates, a word or two of the great things we accomplished as a Nation, placed so high that it won't pay to pull it down for lesser purposes.

Hence, let us place there, carved as high, as close to Heaven as we can, the words of our leaders, their faces, to show posterity what manner of men they were. Then breathe a prayer that these records will endure until the wind and the rain alone shall wear them away.

To a casual observer it would appear that he got his wish.

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## INFORMATION PIECE III

### *Custer State Park*

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SOUTH DAKOTA's public park in the Black Hills is famous for a number of things apart from the fact that Calvin Coolidge made the Game Lodge his summer White House in 1927. The historical markers so generously placed hereabout might lead you to believe otherwise. But nevertheless this great preserve was here even before the President paid his important visit, a remarkable institution for a state that, despite its great wealth of scenery, had very little money that could be spent for intangible benefits.

As in so many improvements, endowments and conservation measures that have had to do with the Black Hills, Senator Norbeck was a principal influence in the establishment of a park system. He lived to see it well developed and a success even if viewed only as a financial investment.

The park at this writing comprises camp grounds, lodges, trout streams, lakes, picnic grounds, recreational areas of all sorts and the State Game Sanctuary—a total of 128,000 acres. In the sanctuary are approximately 1,000 deer, 2,500 elk, 750 buffalo, 30 Rocky Mountain sheep, 300 Rocky Mountain goats and a large number of wild turkeys.

The center of all this great preserve is the Game Lodge, about which are grouped the zoo, corrals, cabins, staff quarters, restaurant and store, museum and the office of Superintendent Carl Burgess. The park property and activities extend in some directions for more than twenty miles.

Sylvan Lake and its hotel, although separately managed, are under Custer State Park administration. So are Gordon Stockade and Blue Bell Lodge and a score of picnic grounds and

camps and odds and ends of concessions that supply them.

Aside from Sylvan, there are two excellent lakes in this preserve, Legion and Stockade. Legion Lake which was first operated by arrangement with the American Legion is not large nor especially beautiful, even as artificial lakes go. But it is one of the most popular resorts in South Dakota. It is equipped with an excellent restaurant and commissary, has excellent facilities for aquatic sports and fishing, and is better prepared than most places in the Hills to provide housing on short notice.

Stockade Lake, on French Creek nearer Custer, is not yet completely developed but has become the center of an almost continuous summer activity. It is a fairly large lake, with a pleasing background of mountains and has a more attractive shore line than even Sylvan. It has ample facilities for boating and swimming. It is four miles west of Legion Lake on U. S. 16.

The Game Lodge is a fairly comfortable old pile, the type of structure invented around 1900 for people who wished "to go roughing it" with quite a lot of modern facilities. As hotels go today its rooms seem small and not too well arranged and its plumbing is definitely inadequate. As against that, it has had for the past season one of the best restaurants in the state. Since the beginning of 1948 it has been under the management of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Herbst of Rapid City and Cheyenne, who brought with them their own kitchen help, most of their dining-room staff, and some basic ideas on the subject of food preparation.

The Game Lodge is thirty-two miles from Rapid City, nineteen miles from Rushmore and seventeen miles from Custer. From the point of view of the public, at least, it is one of the best run parks in the country.

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## CHAPTER 13

### FORWARD, THE LIGHT BRIGADE!

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CUSTER—*The town of Custer is fast becoming one of the largest producers of feldspar in the Black Hills. It is also working a fine deposit of rose quartz.*

—MINING NOTES

GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER with horse, foot and artillery—a thousand soldiers, two naturalists, a geologist and two gold miners—started on his great mission of friendship into the Sioux never-never land, Paha-Sapa, in 1874. Out of Fort Lincoln, Dakota Territory, near the present site of Bismarck, he moved westward and up the valley of the Little Missouri to the vicinity of Highway 212, angled southward to cross the Belle Fourche River within sight of the Devil's Tower and camped on the night of July 17 about a mile and a half east of Joe's Filling Station, Sundance.

Over on the eastern horizon was the misty blue silhouette of the Black Hills, mountains of mystery, where, according to all the law of the land and the current attitude toward treaties and property rights, the celebrated Seventh Cavalry had no business at all.

The Laramie Council of 1851 had guaranteed to the Prairie Sioux that their lands west of the Missouri River should be held inviolate, particularly this chain of sacred mountains which they held to be the dwelling place of the Great Manitou. A similar agreement had been signed at the Laramie Council of 1868. Despite frequent clashes between Indians and whites where the spread of civilization interfered with the buffalo hunting, there still had been no incident of enough importance to justify an abrogation of the treaty. The announced purpose of Custer's armed mission was a peaceful search for a place to establish another military post. All the advance notices indicated that everything was being done with the kindest intent toward the Indians and full appreciation of treaty obligations.

This, of course, was the same sort of conversation that came so fre-

quently from the outposts of empire in those trying times. In the pact with the Sioux, the Great White Father in Washington had agreed to keep the white people out of lands designated as Indian territory. There had been no distinction between military and civilian white people. There had been no subagreement permitting the establishment of forts in a region which, out of awe or fear or terror, the Indians never frequented.

All of this was an academic argument anyway, because Custer's roaring horsemen weren't looking for building sites no matter what sort of information the Fort Lincoln P.R.O. handed out to the press. In the van of the "glimmering glittering cavalcade" rode H. N. Ross and William T. McKay, a pair of miners fresh from the creeks around Sacramento, California. They were practical men, trained in distinguishing between pay dirt and pyrites. But they surely didn't know anything about where to put a fort.

Thanks to the vague commentaries in the school histories and geographies of the last generation one is accustomed to think that nobody had heard of the Black Hills until Custer visited them. You have only to look at the newspaper files of the sixties or the reports of army commanders on the Western plains after the start of the California gold rush to find out what is wrong with that idea.

In the first place one notes the report of Lieutenant G. K. Warren, the result of an extensive tour of exploration in 1857. Lieutenant Warren was topographical engineer for Colonel William S. "White Whiskers" Harney who at the time was engaged in a war against the Mormons. He was detached with a dozen men and sent northward from Fort Laramie for just one purpose—to find just what might lie behind the iron curtain of the Sioux taboo.

Warren, we learn from his contemporaries was not only a brilliant scholar but also a canny strategist and a quick thinker. Two of these qualities enabled him to complete his explorations and get home alive.

Normally he might have got through his work without attracting any attention—for the Indians seldom came close to the Black Hills. On other occasions he might have encountered roving bands without danger inasmuch as the Sioux Nation and the U. S. Cavalry were theoretically at peace. But there were complications. About the time the lieutenant and his party left Fort Laramie, a considerable number of Miniconjou Sioux were moving to garner a winter's supply of buffalo meat. And with them was a recalcitrant young leader named Sitting Bull.

Lieutenant Warren encountered the hunting party near Inyan Kara

Mountain which is in Wyoming, some fifteen miles south of Sundance, and about thirty-five miles southwest of Deadwood. If his trip had ended there, it would have been worth the effort for he had traversed more than three quarters of the west slope of the Black Hills and had made sketch maps of a region virtually unknown. But, having reached Inyan Kara, he began to wonder if he was ever going to get back to his base.

The Miniconjou, so the lieutenant discovered, were actually riding herd on the buffalo to insure themselves a supply in the face of a growing scarcity. The edges of the grazing ground were patrolled by Indian guards who informed Warren that he must not proceed. The white men were destroyers. Their very smell ruined buffalo hunting grounds. They took the food out of the Indians' mouths—a large part of which argument he conceded to be true.

After some palaver it was agreed that the chiefs should decide the matter and presently there came into camp Chief Four Horns of the Hunkpapa Sioux, and his nephew Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull, twenty-six years old and a promising young medicine man, then arose to make his first speech of record. It was a sort of statement of policy such as General Custer might have done well to read before he rode down through this old hunting ground to establish a fort.

The hills are ours, the young exhorter said in effect. They had been there longer than the Indian, longer than the white man and they were hallowed ground.

Why was the council arguing about the presence of the white soldiers? he wanted to know. Soldiers had no right to be there. They had promised to stay on their own side of the treaty boundary and leave the Indians to themselves. And now they had come spying, to make trails across the buffalo lands and to destroy the only home that the Indian had ever known or would ever have.

Sitting Bull is sometimes quoted as having mentioned the lure of gold. But whether he did or not is of no moment. He most certainly knew as other chieftains knew that there was gold in the hills and that white men would stop at nothing to get it.

The chiefs agreed that Warren and his detachment could proceed no farther. The lieutenant accepted their dictum courteously, got into his saddle and withdrew.

But he didn't go back the way he had come. Instead he turned eastward into a valley near the present site of Newcastle, came eastward over the limestone ridges to a point not far from where Ross first put his



## THE BLACK HILLS

shovel into the gravel of French Creek. Thence he wandered about in a series of mountain gorges that led him completely through the heart of the Hills. He came down from the heights to the prairie once more near Bear Butte and from there took a leisurely course southeastward into the Pine Ridge country.

Eventually he turned in his report to his commanding officer along with a chart showing the location of Harney Peak—the highest point in the Black Hills range.

His explorations did nothing much to glamorize the eerie abode of the Sioux spirits. His journal got considerable circulation but for all that the misleading name of the district remained unchanged along with the public's fixed idea of what it looked like.

The Hills continued to be dark, awesome and forbidding. Stories of the Indians' superstitious regard for them had been widely repeated in the settlements. Trappers who had skirted them returned to the Missouri River forts with tales of bitterly hostile Indians and death and disaster. So there was a general feeling along the frontier that some sort of elaborate curse hung over the region . . . and, if there weren't any curse, the land was still unfriendly, unproductive and unprofitable. So nobody went journeying into the Black Hills but that didn't mean that nobody knew about them. . . . There are millions of stay-at-homes today who are in a similar position with regard to Lhasa.

There has been much speculation concerning what reason Custer, whom the Sioux called Yellow Hair, or his superiors in St. Louis, may have had for believing that the Black Hills contained gold. The old records give some light on that subject also. Father Peter John De Smet, S. J. made a journey into the Hills in 1848 and thereafter, until his removal from the mission field in the late sixties, he was in almost constant association with the Sioux Indians. A Lakotah chieftain showed him some glittering dust. (One can merely suppose that it was taken—along with a scalp—from the poke of some unchronicled treaty violator.) Father De Smet was enough of a metallurgist to recognize it for what it was and smart enough to refuse it as a gift.

"It rouses the passions of some white men," he told the chief. "Put it away and show it to nobody." Which, certainly, was very good advice. For his part he made a brief record of the incident which was found sometime after his death at St. Louis University in 1873. In the meantime he had made no mention of it to anybody.

It is reasonable to suppose that if Father De Smet had learned about the gold sometime in the fifties the secret might have been discovered

by others. Aside from the unfortunate who had panned the dust displayed by the Indian chief, at least seven pre-Civil War fortune hunters are named in credible record. In 1887 Louis Thoen, building a house at the foot of Lookout Mountain, near Spearfish, found a flat piece of limestone on which had been scratched a message that may be read today in the Adams Museum, Deadwood:

Came to these hills in 1833, seven of us    DeLacompt    Ezra Kind  
G W Wood    T Brown    R Kent    Wm King    Indian Crow  
All ded but me Ezra Kind    Killed by Indians beyond the high hill  
got our gold june 1834

On the other side of the stone is Ezra Kind's terse, dramatic farewell message:

Got all gold we could carry    Our ponys all got by Indians    I have  
lost my gun and nothing to eat and Indians hunting me.

The authenticity of this tragic history has been fairly well verified. Some years before, R. H. Evans an early settler in the region where Thoen made his discovery had uncovered a cache of badly rusted camp utensils. Nationwide publicity that followed the unearthing of the stone brought many letters to the newspapers. One writer who signed himself Thomas Brown stated that one of his uncles had left Troy, Missouri, with a man named Kent to look for adventure in the Far West. No word of either of them had been heard since.

A surviving relative of Ezra Kind told a similar story, sufficiently detailed to make it plausible.

The scientists and historians who came to look at the stone accepted this corroborative testimony with some reservations but so far nobody has produced any evidence to show that the inscriptions are not properly dated. If they are, then it is fair to suppose that seven men found gold in the Black Hills—and died for their pains—more than forty years before Horatio Ross saw color in his pan on French Creek.

There is plenty of evidence, interesting if not convincing, worthy of review though it names no names and points no dates. In June 1878, two years after the discovery of gold in Deadwood Gulch, the *Black Hills Telegraphic Herald* published this:

Every few months the miner or the adventurous prospector brings to light some fresh evidences of early mining operations in the Hills. These

operations must have been carried on by quite a number of men, but their names and where they came from are matters of conjecture and will probably be remembered to the end of time. Mining implements have been unearthed many feet below the surface at a spot where no mine workings were known to have existed. An iron chain was found partly imbedded in a large tree where it had probably hung for many years. . . . [More years than lay between 1876 and 1878.]

We have now discovered another chapter in the unwritten history. Last Friday there arrived in Lead two hunters, Frenchmen named LeFevre who were on Battle Creek in '76. These men report that one day last January while tracking a wounded deer in the northwest hills, they came across the skeletons of two men lying behind a crude breastwork,

The skulls of both men were in a fair state of preservation. Through one was a large hole, apparently made by a bullet. In the thigh bone of the other skeleton an iron arrow head was imbedded. The wood of the arrow was considerably warped and showed signs of having been exposed to the weather for many years.

The LeFevres also found part of an old camp kettle and the broken stock of an old rifle made of fancy knotted wood. There were several bullet holes in the stock indicating that the fight for life must have been long and bitter.

The hunters searching for something to identify the dead men tore down part of the breastwork and found the cover of a leather memorandum book. There had been considerable writing on it. But all they could make out were the figures 1-2-52—probably 1852.

The hunters gathered what they could find of the remains of the two men and buried them in the breastwork that they had so gallantly defended.

The inscription on this book and the inscription on the wall of the old tunnel discovered last year on Rutabaga Creek are the same. It is possible that these two men escaped an Indian raid on Rutabaga Gulch and were fighting their way to Montana when their ammunition gave out. . . .

Whatever happened to the casually mentioned miners of Rutabaga Gulch or however the two bleached skeletons came to violent death in a far corner of the Hills, they have left in passing all the elements of melodramatic tragedy. But that for the moment is not important. What really seems significant is the fact that they appear to have been in the Black Hills well in advance of the Gold Discovery—perhaps as early as 1852.

One must remember that while all this was going on and the Black Hills remained the gloomy bourne from which no traveler returned, gold

was being found all over Montana publicly and in paying quantities. François Finlay, a trapper, had made a strike on Gold Creek, west of Garrison, in 1852. There were discoveries at Bannack in 1862, Virginia City in 1863, Last Chance in 1864; and all these areas, as well as the Black Hills, were in the Territory of Dakota.

It was natural that prospectors en route overland from the Mississippi Valley to these camps at the rainbow's end might have stopped off to see what might be offered by mountains along the way. It is natural that with gold to be found so near, there should be endless, unprofitable speculation concerning what treasures might well lie concealed in the guarded shrine of the Sioux Manitou. Toussaint Kensler, a half-breed Indian who followed the gold rush to Montana, declared to anybody who would listen to him that he had found gold in the Black Hills in 1864. He made a map that roughly corresponded to the shape of the southern Hills and indicated the place of discovery at a point that could have been French Creek or possibly Spring Creek. Before he had a chance to explain how one got to the map area, however, he was hanged for murder. It isn't surprising to find out that people were talking about the wealth to be found in the Black Hills before there was any open record of a civilian having been there. They were speaking of driving out the Indians and seizing the wealth as of a *fait accompli*. And some of the public utterances of the men who governed the frontiers in the sixties seem on sober review to have been about fifteen years ahead of logic or verisimilitude.

In 1861, it is recorded in the *Northwestern Independent* of Sioux Falls City, Moses K. Armstrong, territorial representative, historian and, as it turned out, prophet, rose in the assembly to sound the doom of Iowa. It appears that some newspapers in Dubuque and Fort Dodge had been critically annoying.

They would like to see our territory fill up and pour trade down into Iowa. But they want immigrants to come here by way of the Red River of the North or the Bering Straits. They are people in torn underwear who talk about the dent in a neighbor's silk hat. But let them crow while they still have a voice. In less than two years Northern Iowa will see us rapping Dubuque over the knuckles with the Golden Key to the Black Hills, and shaking our dust and nuggets in the streets of Chicago!

Armstrong's own little war with the Iowa editors was interrupted by the Sioux uprising in Minnesota, in August 1862, the New Ulm horror, the execution of thirty-eight Indian ringleaders at Mankato, and the

flight of Little Crow's surviving tribesmen into Dakota. But such episodes in the pioneer days had no permanent importance. You might shudder and express your sympathy at news of a massacre a few hundred miles away. But the only Indian with whom you were immediately concerned was the one at your own doorstep . . . in the case of South Dakota, the one who stood in the way of the unselfish white man's project to find out what there was in those Black Hills.

So other voices rose to keep the odd status of Paha-Sapa in the public eye like a flake of sawdust. Other writers than the editor of the *North-western Independent* of Sioux Falls City, Dakota Territory, printed stories, veracious or fictional, about people without names: "A trapper well known to ranchers on Medicine Creek, Wyoming," "A former army sergeant named Jones," or "A Denver man recently arrived in Cheyenne"—said to have made innocuous trips in and out of the off-limits Indian territory.

This, then, was the unexplored region on which the white man (namely General Custer and the Seventh U. S. Cavalry) was about to set foot. Presently the world was going to learn—officially—whether or not the gold that had been finding its way out of the Hills—unofficially—for about forty years was really gold or just conversation. And then, to paraphrase once more from the records of contemporary observers, all hell was going to bust loose.

# CHAPTER 14

## FLOWERS FOR THE GENERAL

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CUSTER, SOUTH DAKOTA—I wish to propose the erection of a statue to the greatest benefactor the Black Hills ever had—namely General George Armstrong Custer. Not only did he discover gold in the Hills, but it was through his efforts that matters were settled with the Indians who didn't want miners here, making it possible for all of us to come to the Hills or go without danger.

—FRANK HEBERT

OUT on the prairie west of Bismarck you can still see—or could until a few years ago—the ruts left by the passing of General Custer's wagon train; looking at them you feel unaccountably closer to Custer than you ever do among the headstones by the Little Big Horn. There was nothing half-hearted about this friendly visit to the Sioux lands. There was no worry or indecision on the part of the leader. The Indians were nobody to be afraid of—not then. And the expedition that embossed its history on the prairie sod was one of the largest military forces that the West had ever seen.

There were a hundred and ten wagons, six ambulances, two field pieces and several caissons in the train, each drawn by six mules. Three hundred bees accompanied the commissary. The personnel consisted of ten companies of the Seventh Cavalry, one each of the Twentieth and Seventeenth Infantry, a platoon of artillery, a detachment of about a hundred Indian scouts and another of fifty white scouts and guides, and a special unit of college professors, geologists, miners, botanists and interpreters—a total of something more than twelve hundred men. Photographs of this ensemble—exceptionally fine examples of the old wet-plate process—are still to be seen in the West River country. They show the whole prairie covered with horsemen and the line of white-covered wagons stretching on and on to become a series of pin points on the

horizon. Twelve hundred men and their war trappings take up a lot of room.

General Custer, sitting his horse at the Belle Fourche River crossing, looked back in smiling pride at the seemingly endless column. He was an old soldier, in experience if not in years, but never had he commanded, never had he seen a task force so well equipped, so keenly trained as this one. It must have seemed a pity to waste so fine a war machine on a mission which the Indians, so far, had shown no sign of resenting. On the other hand he was probably going to remember two years later the freedom from worry that was his that day when his cavalcade rode up to the invisible wall surrounding the forbidden mountains.

Above the creak of saddle leather, the pounding of hoofs and the rattle of sabers and chains, he could hear encouraging sounds from far back in the steadily rolling column. The men were singing, and there hadn't been much singing recently—not in the Seventh Cavalry. Fortunately he wasn't able to foresee that there wasn't going to be much more. They were probably caroling some lugubrious bit about flowers for sweet Jennie's grave or other mortuary necessities, for such was the prevailing taste in music out on the plains. Whatever they sang, the general was pleased, as his report of the expedition made evident.

This wasn't any drive into hostile Indian country. It wasn't any military assignment. It was a picnic. And so it turned out to be. The column moved southward without incident from the place where Sundance was one day going to be and established camp on Inyan Kara Creek only a few miles from the point reached by Lieutenant Warren sixteen years before.

The general seems to have been captivated by his surroundings. He wrote in his official report:

After we crossed the Belle Fourche we began, as it were, skirmishing with the Black Hills. We began by feeling our way carefully along the outlying ranges of the Hills, seeking a weak point through which we might wend our way into the interior.

We continued from the time we departed from the valley of the Belle Fourche to move through a very superior country, covered with the best of grazing and an abundance of timber, principally pine, poplar and several varieties of oak. As we advanced, the country skirting the Black Hills to the southward became each day more beautiful.

On the evening of the twenty-second we halted [on Inyan Kara Creek]. The next day was not favorable for obtaining distant views but

I decided on the following morning to move due east and attempt the passage of the Hills.

We experienced considerable trouble from fallen timber which lay in our pathway. With this exception and with a very little digging necessary in descending into a little valley [Spring Creek, Wyoming, a tributary of Sand Creek], the pioneers prepared the way for the train and we reached camp at 2 o'clock, having marched eleven miles. We found grass, water and wood of the best quality and in great abundance. On the following day we resumed our march up the valley which I had explored on the previous evening and which led us by an easy ascent almost southeast.

After marching nearly twelve miles we camped at an early hour in the same valley. This valley in one respect presented the most wonderful and beautiful aspect. Its equal I have never seen. Neither in private or public park have I ever seen such a prolific display of flowers of the most exquisite color and perfume, so luxuriant in growth that the men picked them without dismounting from the saddle.

It was a strange sight to look back at the advancing column of cavalry and behold the men with beautiful bouquets in their hands while their horses were decorated with wreaths of flowers fit to crown a Queen of the May.

Deeming it a fitting appellation I have named this "Floral Valley."

The Seventh Cavalry probably was never to have another camp like that one. The borders of the stream were strewn with blooms that only the naturalists could identify. The rising slopes were pink velour with masses of wild roses and that evening as the cool breeze came down Spring Creek the perfume that rose from the endless gardens was almost overpowering.

There seems to have been something hypnotic in all this loveliness. Not only did General Custer, the hard-bitten Indian fighter turn out a march report that ranks as the first Chamber of Commerce report on the Black Hills, but his sundry aides also succumbed to the poetry of the moment and turned out similar documents in hand-painted English.

One of them, unfortunately anonymous, was a little briefer than the general in his account of Floral Valley but no less impressed:

The entire expedition for the time revelled in the delights of the place, the soldiers festooning their hats and their horses' bridles with flowers while the regimental band, seated on an elevated rock ledge, played the regiment's own march, "Garry Owen," "The Mocking Bird,"



"The Blue Danube," snatches from "Il Trovatore" and other popular tunes of the day— The music of the band was weird and fascinating.

Professor A. B. Donaldson, the naturalist, added his bit to the lyrics:

The floral decoration is the very richest. Every order and species seem to vie with every other in giving brilliance to the display. The gaudy sun-flower, the delicate hare bell, the fair lily and the bright blue daisy, the coarse eglantine and the modest violet, the gay larkspur and the fragrant peppermint, roses and pinks, asters and phlox, bell-flower and calliopsis, geraniums, goldenrod, purple cone-flower are part of Flora's contribution to these lovely dells.

There was one bit of unpleasantness at this camp. Private John Cunningham died of a chronic intestinal trouble plus an attack of pleurisy. Private Joseph Turner was shot in a quarrel with Private William Roller. The graves of the two victims who were given an impressive military funeral may still be seen on the slope above the spot now marked as "Custer Camp."

Private Roller was removed from his horse and forced to walk all the way back to Fort Lincoln. He was tried, acquitted and returned to duty in time for the Little Big Horn debacle.

After the funeral the expedition turned about, virtually without change of pace and went on through the flowers. Custer discovered what other travelers have noted repeatedly: that the spring-fed stream flowing through the valley had become nearly ice-cold.

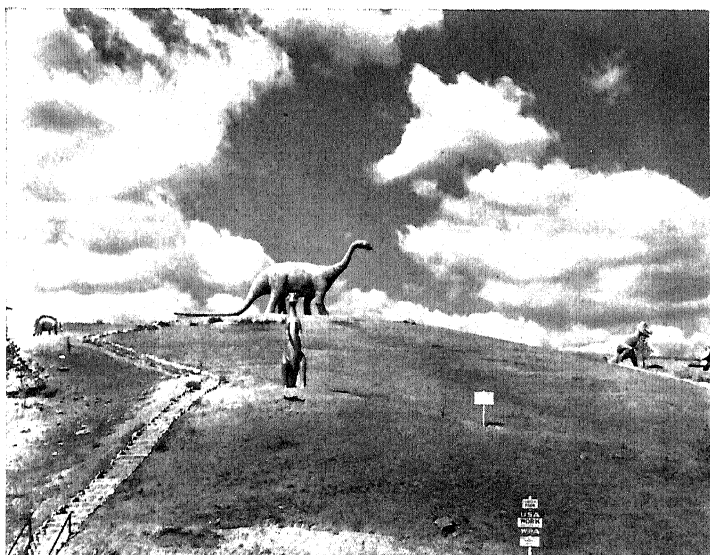
The temperature of two of the many springs was taken and found to be forty-four and forty-four and one-half degrees respectively. The next morning, although reluctant to leave so enchanting a locality, we continued to ascend this valley until gradually, almost imperceptibly, we discovered that we were at the crest of the Western ridge of the Black Hills.

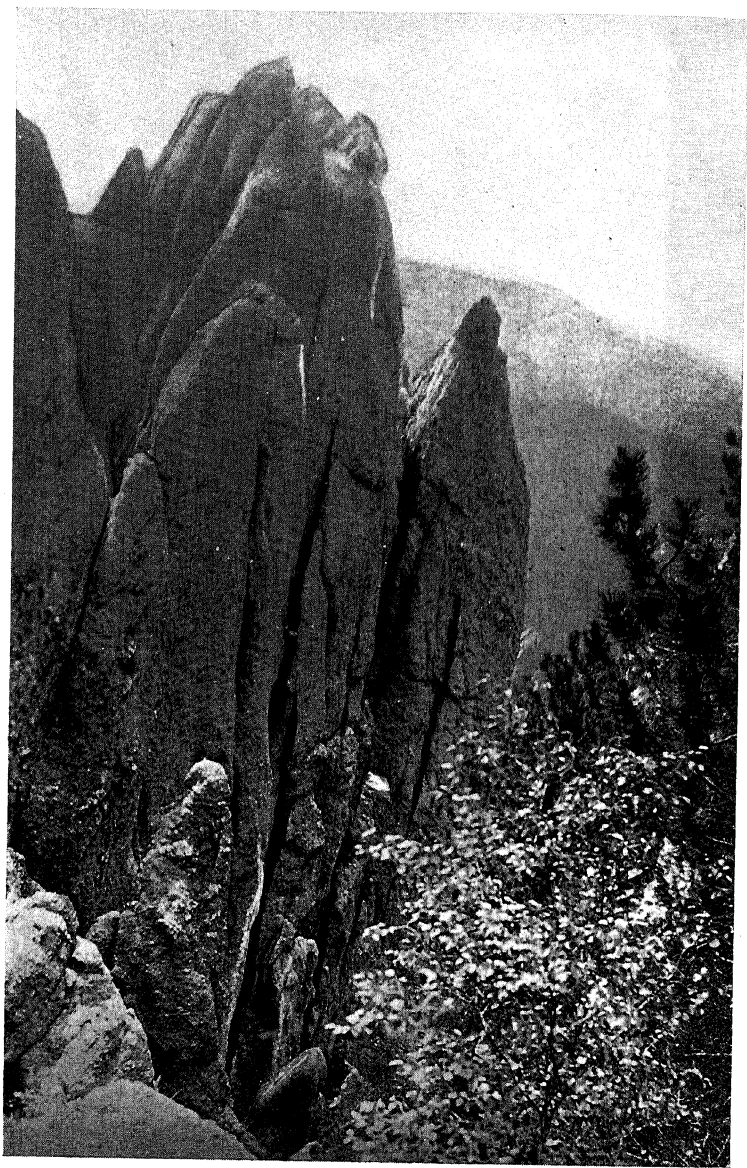
The train went over the Divide and descended into another stream at the bottom of a fantastically eroded canyon. Because of the towered and crenelated walls the general called it Castle Creek which it is still called today. The party camped there for two days while the miners did a little unsuccessful prospecting. On July 30 a move was made to the headwaters of French Creek where the miners spent the day mining and General Custer, accompanied by a few officers, climbed Harney



White-faced Herefords, typical of herds that have made Belle Fourche one of the country's great cattle markets.

Dinosaur Park. Monsters romp in cement on Rapid City's skyline





Needle formation near Sylvan Lake in "The American Dolomites."

Peak. For all the record shows he may have been the first man to scale it.

The picnic was getting more entertaining every day, and on the afternoon of August 2, or July 27, depending on whose record you read, Horatio N. Ross saw gold in the bottom of his pan at a place three and a half miles west of the present town of Custer.

The discrepancy in the dates assigned to the discovery is probably due to Ross's own defective memory. General Custer, Professor Donaldson and Colonel Ludlow of the Engineers, in their reports tend to agree on August 2. But the day and the hour don't make much difference. Somewhere around the end of July 1874, gold was discovered by Custer's miners in a place where they seemed to know in advance that it would be waiting for them. The damage was done, whenever it was done. The Black Hills haven't been the same since. And as for the Indians! And as for Custer . . .

The general and his retinue moved on through the heart of the Hills over much the same course followed by the ubiquitous Lieutenant Warren. They camped for a day or two near Bear Butte to rest not far from the site that was to be the home of the Seventh Cavalry in its declining years. They were out of the Hills. They had traveled about six hundred miles. And they hadn't laid eyes on a single Indian except the Crows who rode with them as scouts.

Custer collated the notes of the travelogue he had written for General Sheridan. But he was anxious to be up and away. Professor Walter Jenney would presently be roaming the Hills to check up on the discovery of gold, but in the end that would make no difference whatever. This job was done.

On August 30, the long column rolled out of the park and headed north across the plains—toward Fort Lincoln and a spot just east of the C. B. & Q. tracks near Crow Agency, Montana.

He had an appointment in Samara.

# CHAPTER 15

## DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE

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CUSTER—*There will be a meeting of rabbits and gold gnomes in the council chamber at the City Hall Saturday morning at 10:30.*

—Announcement in the *Custer County Chronicle*,  
July 1948

GOLD! !

THE LAND OF PROMISE!

Stirring News From the  
Black Hills

THE GLITTERING TREASURE

Found At Last—A Belt  
Of Gold Territory  
30 Miles Wide

THE PRECIOUS DUST

Found Under The  
Horses' Feet

EXCITEMENT

Among the Troops

—*Chicago Inter Ocean*  
August 27, 1874

NOBODY has ever explained how the *Chicago Inter Ocean* managed to get the one great scoop of its uninspired history from a source a thousand miles away and about as accessible as Mars. But there it was. General Custer and his fine caravan had just about reached Bear Butte on the ride back to Fort Lincoln. His completed report had not yet reached General Phil Sheridan in St. Louis before the favored few Chi-

cagoans who read the *Inter Ocean* thrilled to the glad news over their breakfast coffee. Before noon the rest of the world had heard about it. And in twenty-four hours the vanguard of opportunists had already begun to harry the railroads for transportation out to the jumping-off places.

All of this must have been a bitter blow to the Washington truth seekers who had hoped to keep the information a secret among themselves and the thousand-odd members of the Custer expedition. There was some talk of punishing somebody for the leak. But presently the army and the Department of the Interior were too busy to do anything about it.

Charlie Reynolds, the scout who was later killed at the battle of the Little Big Horn, took General Custer's preliminary report back to civilization from a camp near Harney Peak. Dan Newell, Seventh Cavalry blacksmith, reshod Reynolds' horse with the shoes turned backward, which unusual arrangement was designed to fool the Indians. Reynolds, without further preliminaries, took the pouch from the proud hand of Yellow Hair himself and started off, hell-for-leather, for Fort Laramie.

Whether such wily Sioux as ran across his tracks got the idea that somebody had taken a lone ride in the general direction of the Hills or else was heading southwestward toward Laramie, riding his horse wrong end to is purely conjectural. Reynolds met no Indians, saw no signs of them. He got to the fort, delivered his dispatches and, so he declared afterward, talked about the expedition with no one.

His silence, if any, was a futile precaution. The secret was presently trickling back over the telegraph wires from Chicago with many details that must have amazed Reynolds as much as anybody else. The hunt was up.

The Black Hills gold rush was the last stampede of its sort in the Old West. There would never be another like it because presently there wouldn't be any more Old West. It was like previous booms in all its essential details. It was the same old melodrama with the same old plot and the same cast of characters and only slightly different scenery. But it differed in one important respect. It was the first gold rush in which the fortune hunters could hope for something like modern conveniences. It was possible for them to ride most of the way to the Black Hills by train or steamboat. And there would soon be stage transportation from the present terminals.

"This rush," Colorado Charlie observed to a reporter for the *Sidney Morning Telegraph* in September 1874, "is going to be a lallapaloozer."

The Indians who had been expecting something of the sort, and a lot of harried army officers who were getting tired of unilateral agreements would have agreed with him.

The rush didn't start right away. The government, a little shocked by the active enthusiasm that had greeted the gold announcement, issued a solemn warning that nobody was to go near the Hills. There was some belated mention of treaty rights and the threat that trespassers would be kept out by force of arms. But none of that had any effect on the so-called Gordon party which arrived at Custer's old camp on French Creek before the year was out.

With these intrepid—and impetuous—pioneers came Mrs. Annie Donna Tallent who took immediate status as “the first white woman in the Black Hills” and remains in legend as a sort of local Joan of Arc. She was also the only woman in the Gordon train and traveled with her husband, D. G. Tallent, and her young son, Robert E. Tallent, neither of whom has received much mention in the dispatches.

The Gordon party, which seems to have had some pretty smart leadership, promptly erected cabins to accommodate twenty-eight people and a high log stockade to protect them against Indian attack. They lived comfortably and without any interference from the Sioux throughout the winter while other parties straggled in from Fort Laramie, Cheyenne or Sidney and took up claims along French Creek. They had become the center of a thriving—or at least an active—community in July 1875 when they received an eviction notice from General George Crook!

All the miners in the neighborhood were mobilized at a wide place in the valley two and a half miles above the stockade, and there, to establish evidence of prior occupancy, they platted a townsite with streets that would be “wide enough so's you can turn six yoke ox teams around in them.” And in honor of Yellow Hair, the first official resident of the district, they called the place Custer. On August 10, 1875, came General Crook's cavalry which escorted them to Cheyenne. Once more the dark mountains were theoretically uninhabited.

Some of the dispossessed gold seekers were willing to take the army's “No!” for an answer and went home on the first train. Some decided to get jobs and settle down in the Wyoming capital. But the third group, and that included most of the original Gordon party, decided to mark time until the generals or the Indians should change their minds.

It merits no place in a Dakota history, perhaps, but one marvels at the way the hardy pioneer seems always to have been able to feed himself even as an unemployed inmate of a virtual internment camp. The country was in the middle of hard times. Cheyenne was a raw boom

town with a boom town's accommodations and prices. The Gordon gold seekers hadn't seen an incoming dollar in six months. And what with stockade building, exploration, prospecting and a severe winter, they couldn't have had time to do much gold panning. But somehow they did live on provender they had hauled out of Sioux City nearly a year before, or on their own pure aspirations.

They are not remarkable in that. In all the stories one has ever heard about the roaring Old West there has never been any indication that a gold seeker ever needed anything to eat.

The Gordon party waited just south of the deadline established by the military to mark the boundary between civilization and the back trail—now fairly well marked—to French Creek. Behind them, day by day, came new mobilizations of eager adventurers to rave and fret at the cavalrymen they had failed to elude. The day came when pioneers more determined than cavalrymen were ranged along the Cheyenne frontier. And there were other rapidly growing mobs at Sidney and Fort Laramie and Sioux Falls City and Yankton and Fort Pierre. Rumbles of rising indignation among the Sioux tribes didn't cool them off any while they waited.

They drew encouragement from their increasing numbers and began to boast of a day when they would pour into the Hills in spite of the military . . . and the generals were beginning to feel that the day might be fairly close at hand.

The worst of the situation was—from the army's point of view—that only about half of the rainbow chasers were stopping to argue. Hundreds of them, possibly thousands, were slipping in small groups across the prairies and into the sunless canyons of the middle Hills, unseen by Sioux or soldiers. At any rate there was no doubt now that the forbidden territory was filling up with them. That a lot of them were going to be found by their associates presently, dead and without their scalps, went without saying.

The histories of some of these illegal argonauts have come to us through court records, personal notes or, more often through the garrulity of others of their kind. In their amazing book, *The Black Hills Trails*, Jesse Brown and A. M. Willard tell the story of a sort of underground railway that made at least one trip between Sidney and Custer. It is interesting to note that a couple of months after the enforced exodus of the Gordon party Custer was able to muster forty-five sharpshooters as a protection against the Indians.

In the fall of 1875, a government treaty commission offered to buy Paha-Sapa from the Sioux Nation. The commissioners offered \$6,000,-



000 or \$400,000 a year for mining rights. The shocked chieftains, led by Red Cloud, demanded \$100,000,000—a million dollars for every year since the Oglala chief, Standing Buffalo, had discovered them in 1775. It seemed impossible to reach a figure somewhere between. So the commissioners, a bit shaken by the openly hostile attitude of the Sioux negotiators, returned to Washington; Red Cloud, Spotted Tail and Little Big Man, still violently angry, rode back toward the West River country; the army suddenly decided to quit protecting treaty violators and withdrew from the Hills. At that moment the war with the Sioux was on—and so, belatedly, was the gold rush.

The winter of 1875 was a bad one in the southern Hills and snow came early. But that was no barrier to the tide of wagons that presently came rolling up from Fort Laramie and Cheyenne. The one-time residents of the Gordon stockade returned in June 1876 and spent an interesting week re-establishing their claims and trying to find caches of gold and other personal belongings that they had buried before leaving with the eviction squads. They seem to have been fairly successful at it, especially in getting the community to recognize their so-called property rights. Their six months' experience as early settlers made them men of distinction. But they don't seem to have had too much luck recovering their buried pots and pans. For once they laid no blame on the Indians.

Custer's expansion is still something unique in the story of American boom towns. It was laid out on August 10, 1875. Its population on September 1, 1875 is reported to have been six. The population around the first of October is reported to have been more than a thousand. But by mid-December the town boasted of ten thousand inhabitants and twenty-seven hundred houses "of all types." It appears that gold in paying quantities was coming from somewhere—out of French Creek or out of the newly arrived miners.

Custer City, for a time at least, was one of the most riotous places on earth but it lost its chance for permanent rating with Sodom and Gomorrah through uncontrollable bad luck and man's yearning for better profit. Late in 1875 James Pearson, a prospector from Yankton, who had evaded Crook's soldiers, wandered into the northern Hills and camped in a gulch filled with dead trees. There, looking for the outlet of a spring, he discovered gold-bearing sand in surprising quantity. He kept the secret as long as he could.

In March 1876 began the rush to Dead Tree Gulch, or as it was presently known, Deadwood City.

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## INFORMATION PIECE IV

### *Hill City*

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HILL CITY, the second camp in the history of the Black Hills gold rush, was founded in 1876 by Thomas Harvey, John Miller, Hugh McCullough and others who made a strike on Spring Creek.

Like Custer it had two or three months of wild prosperity and, also like Custer, it was emptied overnight by the stampede to Deadwood Gulch. One hero, whose name has not been preserved, declined to join in this mass movement on the grounds that he was doing all right with the claim he already had. He was prospering in a modest way a few months later when many of his old neighbors began to drift back.

Placer mining was the district's principal industry for many years before any quartz lead turned out to be worth working. The Grizzly Bear Mine with a twenty-stamp mill for a time was one of the best gold producers in the country.

The finding of tin in 1883 started a new boom in the Hill City area and furnished a long-wearing, nonshrinking basis for international argument. Dr. H. S. Ferguson is generally given credit for the discovery at the Etta Mine, six miles east of Harney Peak. He picked up some species of ore that he could not identify. It was sent to Quincy, Illinois, for assaying and turned out to be cassiterite. Shortly after that other specimens of tin ore were found in Palmer Gulch on the other side of Harney.

What happened then has never been adequately explained. There arrived in the Hills a group of tin experts representing a British syndicate and these engineers investigated every claim within a radius of ten miles from the Etta. The report that they

turned in was good enough to bring a tide of English capital into the Black Hills tin business.

The Harney Peak Consolidated Tin Company was formed to buy tin properties and within a few months had paid out something more than two million dollars and had gained control of all the tin claims in the Hills. Improvement of the properties began at once and in 1892 an expensive reduction plant was finished.

The plant ran two months and then closed down forever. It was announced at the time that the company was suspending operations pending an adjustment of differences between British and American stockholders. But the argument if any was apparently beyond hope of compromise when the Harney Company went into bankruptcy and out of business.

So now you have another folk story to add to the one about the treasure that lies locked in the strong boxes of the trolls at the bottom of the Holy Terror. Any old-timer will tell you about the tin that lies scattered about the foot of Harney. And the odd part of this legend is that it can be proved. There's tin in them thar Hills. Someday somebody may figure a way to get it out.

Hill City, a quiet, friendly little town, gets its share of the tourist business. It has its own scenery to offer. Reno Gulch, five miles southwest on the Reno Gulch Forest Road is one of the loveliest places in a spectacular region. It offers some trails into the hunting preserves of the limestone district a little easier than the giddy climb between Custer and Gillette Canyon. It affords the easiest approach to Deerfield Dam, a practical project that has become one of the most interesting sights in the Hills of itself and has added a few square miles of marine beauty as lagniappe.

Castle Creek, a tributary to Rapid Creek, was dammed at this point to protect the irrigation rights of ranchers who were beginning to look askance at Rapid City's steadily increasing water consumption. The lake impounded by the dam is not only the largest in western South Dakota but a quiet, idyllic

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spot in a rugged wilderness. But that, of course, is purely accidental. To hundreds of people wresting a living from the prairie between Rapid City and the Cheyenne River it is a reservoir that will maintain the level of Rapid River in seasons of drought and control it in times of flood. Tourists don't often get off the beaten path far enough to look at it. It's not on any of the regular sight-seeing itineraries. But it's fairly well known to the fishermen of the district as you'll discover if you drive out there on any sunny Sunday afternoon in the summer.

The road, after it turns west from the railroad at a whistle stop labeled Tigerville has plenty to offer—sometimes green mountain prairie ringed with smoky blue hills, quick descents into rocky crevices along Slate Creek, glimpses of somnolent sheep camps, hazy vistas of ghost towns and abandoned workings.

Doubling back from Deerfield and turning north once more along the railroad at Tigerville, the road leads across a timbered plateau like the heights above Flagstaff, Arizona. Near Mystic it angles down the face of the cliffs into Castle Creek which in its course between medieval walls and battlements looks today the same as it did when it astounded Custer seventy-five years ago.

Mystic, once a hopeful railroad center—a prospective division point on a route between Chicago and the Pacific Coast—once the scene of mining activities promoted by experts fresh from Eldorado or Ophir, has gone back to sleep. The railroad dream came definitely to an end in 1947 when the Rapid City, Black Hills and Western line abandoned service and wrecking crews came around to salvage the rails. The visions of great wealth faded out earlier than that when F. H. Long's milling and experimental plant shut down and the thin little veins of yellow in the canyon walls pinched out. Today what remains of this ambitious community huddles around the Burlington's little red station carrying on a trade with the natives, such as ranchers, foresters and unconvinced prospectors.

Riding northward over a surprising road that is safe enough

although it seems to have been designed for a tightrope walker you come eventually to Rochford, another frustrated bonanza town. Rochford was a boom town in 1878, moribund in the middle eighties and almost too dead for the adrenalin in 1896. It has had some recovery since but not much. You catch some glimpse of the spirit that once moved it when the road on its way from Mystic to Lead crawls down from a shelf on a precipice into what probably used to be Main Street. Straight ahead are two buildings that might have been taken out of some museum or some Hollywood Horse Opera, a couple of false fronts labeled from left to right: SHAMROCK DANCE HALL and IRISH GULCH SALOON. The dance hall shows signs of having served most of the time as some sort of mercantile establishment. The saloon is an orderly store with tables in it where sourdoughs sit and reminisce about the prosperous old days that never happened.

The road that brings you here is interesting because of the unusual number of finger posts that mark the trails leading off it and names that bring back something of the unholy atmosphere of the town's great expectations: Minnesota Ridge, Montezuma Hill, Silver Creek, Lookout (six miles), Gimlet Creek, Breakneck Gulch, Moonshine Gulch, Bloody Gulch. You can follow it onward through Nahant and Englewood to Lead. Or you can go back to the first crossroad and bear west and north until you come out onto Highway 85 above Pactola. You are still in the sadly historic region of old gold mines.

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# CHAPTER 16

## CORONER'S REPORT

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DEADWOOD—*Butcher's delivery boys on horseback had better pay some attention to the traffic rules. We expect to read any morning about half a dozen people being killed.*

—*Deadwood Pioneer*, October 29, 1885

By the middle of July 1876, Deadwood was a town, if one can call it that, of twenty-five thousand inhabitants. It may have been larger. As Montana Joe Farley wrote to a relative in Chicago: "You can't count people who are living in layers."

The rush, so far as Custer City was concerned, started like a leak in the dike. A few restless souls abandoned their French Creek diggings about the middle of April and went north with a bull train from Cheyenne and a cargo of flour. The miners held a meeting to discuss the news of the new bonanza and compare notes. A couple of unnamed volunteers announced that they would take a ride to Deadwood Gulch, find out what was going on and report. They went but they failed to get back with their report. It would have made no difference anyway, because in three more days the stampede had started. Presently Custer was left with two hundred and fifty people, two hundred and fifty people and an impressive array of empty log cabins. Custer had become a ghost town in the shortest time on record.

It is an article of faith among the gold hunters that every new gold field is richer than any found before. Nobody had yet discovered how much wealth might lie strewed in the gravel of French Creek. Nobody knew whether the Deadwood strike would produce mountains of gold or none. It made no difference; the luck you were going to get was always better than the luck you had. So everybody went to Deadwood unconcerned about such things as meals and lodging in one of the worst winters that the West had ever seen.

The town had been a chaos of snowbound shacks in mid-February. Then chinook winds came to bring an early spring and turn it into an impassable bog. All around it in the canyons new settlements sprang up and the incredible traffic from outside cut their approaches into new morasses.

One of the most amazing things about gold camps, it seems to me, is their almost complete freedom from death from natural causes. The overland trails were blazed by the grave markers of men, women and children—the old and the young—who had died of much the same ailments that might have overtaken them in the East. Out there in the wide open spaces—in the sunlight, trekking across a region where most likely a disease germ had never ventured before—they sickened and died. But nothing like that ever seems to have happened in a gold camp.

Thousands upon thousands of people thronged into Deadwood Gulch in the middle of an awful winter. They ate what they could get—mostly bacon and beans. They drank too much of some of the worst whisky that had ever been contrived in the back room of a frontier saloon. They slept in caves, tents, lean-tos made of saplings, brushwood shelters or under thin blankets on the frozen ground.

They had no such thing as privacy. Even along the creeks everybody was virtually sitting in everybody else's lap. The sanitary condition of the gulch was unspeakable in June 1876 and didn't improve for a very long time. By all the rules the adventurers who failed to die from exposure during the first two weeks should certainly have fallen before a first-class typhoid epidemic. But there was no epidemic.

In reading the memoirs of the pioneers, the early files of the newspapers and the more weathered of the headstones on Mount Moriah you get the impression that nobody in the northern Hills ever suffered from a disease more virulent than chilblains or the croup. Such records as you can find around Deadwood indicate that in 1876 and 1877 there were no deaths at all from typhoid, diarrhea, dysentery or similar filth diseases. There is some mention of smallpox, mostly as a romantic background for stories about Calamity Jane. But it's not quite definite that anybody died of that either—with or without Calamity's ministrations.

People died of other things, however. The causes were once itemized by Hooky Jack Leary, Rapid City's remarkable policeman, as "arguments and knives and guns." Which may be an oversimplification. J. S. McClintock, stage-line entrepreneur who wrote a book about early Deadwood, uses a few more words:

In summarizing the number of fatalities of white persons incident to, and attendant upon, the precipitant rush and the invasion of the white men into the great Sioux Indian reservation of Dakota territory in 1876, and the appropriation of the ceded rights of the people of that reservation, it is not deemed expedient by the author of this work to encumber the pages of history with unnecessary details, in the recital of those fatalities, nor is it considered necessary to use up space in the description of the well-remembered occurrences of the tragical nature where unsightly blood-lettings, though unfollowed by fatal results, were brought plainly into evidence.

By this one gathers that Mr. McClintock intends to deal only with the murder and skip the mayhem. He begins his inventory of causes almost completely in agreement with Constable Hooky.

The majority of these fatalities which occurred in the towns and mining districts of the Black Hills originated in disputes between two or more persons upon the question of priority rights at a time when there existed no statutory law in the hills, nor any code of principles other than the great moral law—and while the law was recognized and observed by the great masses of the people, it was nevertheless ignored and utterly disregarded by a small but insistent minority who, apparently, had never heard of such a law.

This self-constituted element of early day Black Hills society, depended chiefly for prompt and satisfactory decisions in their own favor upon a border ruffian code in which the six-shooter was relied upon as a terminating factor.

This question of priority rights over which arose practically all disputes, was by no means confined to such legitimate affairs as the adjustment of mining and city lot locations, but was frequently brought to a test in many disreputable joints of which the Main Street of Deadwood was recognized as the mother lode. Such despicable institutions were not only tolerated but fostered if not liberally patronized by a part of the ruling officials of the new city.

It was here, on the second floors of the many saloons and gambling houses, as well as in more filthy dives in the so-called Bad Lands district down the street, where many incautious individuals were lured. They were entrapped through well-planned devices of entrapment aided and augmented by a glass or two. Mixed drinks were proffered seemingly with the best of motives by oily tongued spotters capably assisted by a bevy of the pitiable female inmates of these veritable dens of vice.

Hooky Jack apparently had overlooked this part of the graveyard-



filling technique and he seems to have forgotten some other things, too. Mr. McClintock proceeds:

Once through the door and the fate of the unwary victim was settled so far as his personal assets were concerned. The more considerate of these deluded mortals, wakening to a realization of his unbearable condition, would take his departure to brood or rave to himself. Others, with less forethought, would enter into a noisy tirade of unbecoming language and proceed to inaugurate a roughhouse. The head of the damnable concern would then step from behind the scenes where he had been waiting to get a lion's share of the loot. With brass knuckles or revolver used as a bludgeon he would quiet the row in accordance with the established rule of priority rights by pounding the helpless, and now moneyless, sucker into a state of insensibility.

Mr. McClintock's picture of Deadwood in the fall of 1876 is harrowing but even if he had told it in less decorative language it would probably be as accurate as a coroner's report of the period. One gathers from other sources that the town was something of an overheated melting pot. There was no agency to screen the new citizens who arrived by every stagecoach and every bull train and on horseback and afoot. Captain C. V. Gardner said of it years afterward: "It takes all kinds of people to make a world. . . . And they were all there."

Robert E. Driscoll points out in his book, *Seventy Years of Banking in the Black Hills*, that the panic of 1873 and the continuing unrest of ex-soldiers unable to adjust themselves to conditions that followed the Civil War had given the country a large bloc of solid citizens made wanderers by necessity. News of Ross's gold discovery brought large numbers of them to the Hills—college men, experienced bankers and merchants, lawyers, engineers, newspapermen, professors. . . .

Well, it's true enough that Deadwood got all of those people. But that wasn't all Deadwood got—it takes all kinds of people! . . .

Audubon is listed among the early visitors. So is Walt Whitman. What he was doing there has never been established. Theodore Roosevelt came on business.

With these important personages came other newsworthy people. Named in the record are: Madame Canutson, a female bullwhacker; Belle Haskell, an unusually dignified bawd; Seth Bullock, friend of a Montana rancher named Theodore Roosevelt, previously mentioned; Jack Langrishe, a Dublin actor of considerable talent; Al Swearengen, proprietor of the Gem Theater, most raucous dive in town; Scott Davis,

shotgun stage messenger; Captain C. V. Gardner, freighter and newspaperman; Martha Jane Canary, sometimes called Calamity Jane; California Jack, a Faro boxman; Cold Deck Johnny, a dealer; Swill Barrel Jimmy, a pioneer bum; Johnny Behind the Deuce, a card manipulator; Three Sixes Joe, ditto; Slippery Sam, ditto; Bummer Dan, a bum named Dan; Mineral Jack and Bedrock Tom, miners with gambling sidelines; Henrico Livingstone, a woman who thought she had gold in her town lot and was afraid somebody was going to tear her house down to get it.

With this motley crew came a quiet-mannered young man who attracted no particular attention even when natives found out who he was. His name was George Glover and he was the son, by her first marriage, of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy. The son, born after his father's death in 1844, had been placed in the care of a nurse. He arrived in Deadwood just about the time she was stirring public comment with her first book on Christian Science, *Science of Man*, with a chapter on "Science and Health."

George Glover worked in the gold mines of the area and seemed to like the life. Discovery of his mother's identity had been a surprise to him but it seems to have caused no shock. He continued in his quiet fashion to do the things he had been doing before. Distance prevented their seeing much of each other and it was difficult for them to correspond because he had never learned to write. Whether or not she might have wished him to make his home with her in Boston, he was opposed to leaving the Black Hills. He was then thirty-four or five years old and Mrs. Eddy was virtually a stranger to him.

Eventually he married and settled in Lead. Later his mother built a house for him and made him a monthly allowance which was continued after her death in December 1910. He died in Lead during the First World War.

Virtually all the gunmen and guerrillas who had been infesting the settlements paid their respects to Deadwood about the time when Glover first saw it. One bit of gossip that placed Sam Bass among the regular customers of the Bella Union seemed dubious until he got himself identified with a stage robbery and the murder of Johnny Slaughter. Wyatt and Morgan Earp, recently of Dodge City, were definitely present. For a shorter time, so was Bat Masterson.

And, of course, there was also James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok.

# CHAPTER 17

## DEADWOOD THE DURABLE

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DEADWOOD—*What more colorful community has the West produced in its pioneer days! Where can a greater galaxy of men be listed than the early pioneers of this community, the merchants, the financiers, and the miners who helped build Deadwood and the Black Hills!*—R. E. DRISCOLL

THE charm of Deadwood, unlike that of any other gold-rush relic you are likely to see, lies in its victory over time. Save for a few incongruities like electric lights and automobiles in the streets, it looks just about the same today as it did within a decade after Pearson made his strike. In its atmosphere it is one frontier town that never died and probably never will.

Maybe it's a little quieter now than it once was . . . at any rate you don't see any wheels spinning where they might shock the eye of a deputy sheriff. The high-pressure honky-tonks have vanished. There is a filling station where the Green Front used to be and an information booth on the site of the Gem Theater. The memory of the Bella Union has long been covered up by a business block. A three-eleven fire recently went through what remained of Patsy Carr's old Mansion House. And when last seen firemen were hauling ashes out of the place that succeeded Number Ten, where, according to the sign outside, somebody named Jack McCall murdered somebody named Wild Bill Hickok.

But don't let that disturb you. The venerable Bodega is open again and doing a thriving business with the same old bar on the same old site and with part of the original cast. So are a baker's dozen of other mellow old saloons. If not all of them have traditions going back to 1876, no casual visitor would guess it. And for all that you might think that the community is getting a little strait-laced there are evidences of a greater liberalism than the gold rush knew. In all the picturesque

boozing kens, even the respectable ones, the management's policy is stated in large print: LADIES INVITED.

Deadwood seems to have been fortunate in picking a municipal government for the middle eighties. There was likewise an unusual wave of civic pride. And the evidence shows that the community had plenty of a necessary third ingredient—namely money.

Fire swept the gulch on the night of September 26, 1879, and a well-established shack town which might have been difficult to get out of the way of progress disappeared. A flood in 1883 took off the remnants of a slum that had been collecting in the creek bottom. The citizens' committees, formed to build a new Deadwood on a foundation of ashes and silt, were unanimously agreed in their city planning. . . . They had to be. Deadwood in 1876 consisted of one street hanging between a canyon wall and a mountain stream and its basic plat hasn't been altered much since. For good or bad the layout of the new Deadwood as it began to sprout in 1887 wasn't going to be affected by the notions of a later generation's municipal improvers. The new Deadwood wasn't going to be subject to any whimsical change—not unless somebody found a way to blow down a couple of mountains.

The town rose rapidly in a building boom such as has never since been approximated in the Hills. And this time the citizenry, aflame with gold-plated chauvinism, built it to stay. There was no lack of building material in the neighborhood, including long-term credit. Business had been booming since the fire burned itself out—you can read some of the evidence in the Adams Museum files: "Tim Walsh has a good supply of bacon on hand—all you want—at the old prices." "Chase's sells cheap. . . . Men's clothing. . . . No change in prices." "Joe Gandolfo has opened up his fruit store at the old stand and has fine selection of fruits." "Get your groceries at Mathiessen and Goldberg's—Old Firm! Old Prices!"

On October 10 the *Black Hills Times* was filled with prophecy and optimism:

After the derangement of the general run of business, we have settled down to the regular course of business. In all branches of trade our merchants, artisans and laboring men are as busy as a bee in a tar barrel. There has been no tendency to take advantage of the situation and tenders of credit have been extended to all our principal business men. Some do not need it. The business outlook was never better and this is a mere transient loss in the course of trade. . . . It was remarkable that no merchant made any attempt to raise prices on any com-

modity although there was a shortage of some necessities. Other towns in the hills that had a supply of articles needed on hand, graciously responded to all requests and shared supplies. Western spirit never showed up in a clearer light than now in the time of distress.

The "old prices" of which the Deadwood merchants spoke so feelingly in this crisis were about level with the gold-rush tariffs which most of the United States paid for staples in 1947: eggs at seventy-five cents a dozen; butter one dollar a pound; bacon fifty cents a pound; whisky twenty-five cents for a two-ounce glass. Pork at twenty-five cents a pound was considerably cheaper. Arbuckle's coffee, priced at one dollar a pound, was a general medium of exchange. Cans of it were piled up behind the dealers in the gambling joints along with the chips.

But where butter costs a dollar a pound there must be somebody with a dollar willing to buy it. And where you can sell butter at a dollar a pound, business is good. . . .

The buildings that replaced the flimsy sheds of slabs and clapboarding along Main Street were generally stone or brick and two or three stories high. Business rivalry insured their uniform quality.

Oddly enough, in an era partial to the neo-ghastly school of architecture with cupolas and curlicues and iron gingerbread, most of these blocks were pleasing to look at. The town got through its reconstruction without a single monstrosity worthy of note. Its architecture today may not have been any great triumph in design or treatment, but at any rate it was typical of the best taste of its period. . . . And this in Deadwood, the current conception of Nineveh.

The buildings, through a combination of good materials and the best-skilled labor in the country, survived the years, as the men who put them up intended they should. For one reason or another their exteriors have been little changed in fifty-odd years. The air of the Hills is free from soot and stone weathers slowly so the business blocks, public buildings and even warehouses are as fresh-looking as they were on the day of their riotous formal openings.

That is why Deadwood is not only different from other cities but a phenomenon worth a trip to the Hills for itself alone. It is a modern, going concern, a sophisticated postwar American city, that gets along quite well, thank you, with the scenery of the eighties. It differs from ghost towns in the first place because it is one of the most vital communities in a thousand miles and secondly because it supports no aura of moth balls, lavender or mildew. Only your better judgment—and

posters advertising THE DAYS OF '76—tell you that it is as old as sin. Physically it looks as if the plasterers moved out a few hours ago.

If you go up to the White Rocks and look across the narrow slot carved by Whitewood Creek, you will see one Hill town that really seems to deserve its place in the eternal Hills. Except for the Franklin Hotel, the Federal Building and the Adams Museum, you are looking at Deadwood on the day when the treasure coach was held up at Canyon Springs or the day Annie Donna Tallent arrived in town, or the day they got news of the Wounded Knee massacre. . . . Custer and his men died only last week. Wild Bill, it seems, was buried yesterday. You pay no attention to the airplane streaking across the mountaintops toward the airport on the Spearfish Road. It doesn't belong here at all.

Of course, not all of the new Deadwood was built of stone, and much of what seemed to be an important part of it as recently as forty years ago exists only in the memories of the graybeards. But in an atmosphere like this it's easily brought back.

Stand at the middle of Main Street facing the hill where the Boulder Canyon Road branches off toward Sturgis and you are looking across the area once known as the Deadwood Bad Lands. A highly innocuous and uninteresting region it is now—parallel rows of filling stations, garages, repair shops, small stores and the like. Your imagination will take a bit of prodding before you can see three buggyloads of Gem Theater girls mobilizing over there near the grease pit for the regular evening parade. The ectoplasm of the Green Front is more recent and ought to be more visible. But you get little out of its return from the grave except the smell of beer and stale tobacco smoke that made it identifiable even on a dark night half a block away. The Green Front in its brightest hour was always more bawdy than gaudy.

As for the Bella Union, where some itinerant troupers played Gilbert and Sullivan for one hundred and thirty nights and (on other occasions) several people shot one another, seems more tangible as seen through a burned-out store front than it did when the Mansion House was carrying on its old traditions. You see it now for the influence it exerted on this region, for the style it set in local entertainment and the business it provided for the coroner.

It was one of the dives against which J. S. McClintock directed his diatribe in his chapter on Old Deadwood's casualty list. Vividly he described the process by which well-intentioned visitors to such places as

the Bella Union were made drunk on mixed drinks and badly beaten. And he ended on a solemn note:

Notwithstanding the many brutalities as above depicted which occurred in Deadwood in its early days, only a comparatively few fatalities were reported as resulting therefrom. However, this low estimate of deaths is not applicable to the number of cases of erysipelas which followed in train of these unholy episodes.

The Bella Union, however, was long gone before Patsy Carr tried the experiment of putting vice in a brownstone front. So was Number Ten where Wild Bill died. The both of them went in the fire of '79.

It is interesting to observe, as one looks back over the lore of this end of town, that the entrepreneurs of vice and whoopee never seem to have had much faith in it as a permanent investment. When the rest of Deadwood was trying to build a city that would be strong, durable, fire-proof—and expensive—the managers of such drops as the Gem, the Bucket of Blood, the Montana and the Green Front housed their enterprises in airy structures made of knotty pine. So it was that the Gem Theater burned down in the nineties. The Green Front went the same way although it lasted until 1913. The fire saved the city the cost of a slum clearance.

The Bella Union lingers most vividly in local memoirs of the drama because it was the first on the scene. It started business as a variety theater before the end of 1876 and followed the pattern of showhouses that had preceded it in dozens of mining camps throughout the West. It was a log building with a somewhat unfinished interior. A row of benches arranged somewhat in the order of theater seats ran down the middle of it. They were made of slabs mounted on stakes driven into the dirt floor. But there were fairly wide aisles—wide enough to permit the circulation of drink peddlers and “lady ushers.” And privacy was assured the more fastidious customers in seventeen curtained boxes. One of the principal attractions of the place was the piano—the first in the Hills—which was installed with great ceremony when it arrived after a two months’ trip from Bismarck by bull train.

Its price schedules as preserved in Deadwood newspaper files show that the management catered to sourdoughs of moderate means rather than the socially elect. General admission cost two dollars and a half. Seats in the reserved section were five dollars. The boxes, however, cost what the traffic would bear—drinks not included.

The physical appearance of the place improved as business warranted,

which was as soon as the manager, Billy Nuttall, could get some more credit with the local sawmill. Toward the end of the year it was the brightest spot not only in Deadwood but in all the northern Hills. And presently it began to present some of the best drama in the history of the theater, impromptu sketches than ran mostly to tragedy, and all of them on the wrong side of the footlights.

Estelline Bennett in *Old Deadwood Days* recounts one of its most astonishing productions: A girl whose name is now forgotten was on the stage singing sad songs about home and Mother and a couple of hundred miners were weeping silently into their beards. Suddenly out of the night that was eighteen below came a general admission customer who bowled over a lady usher and dashed for the reserved seat section. From short range he fired two shots at the piano player—and missed.

The piano player, who apparently was experienced, swung around on his stool, fired once and didn't miss. The visitor dropped. The singer went into hysterics, wringing her hands and screaming, "Oh, John! He's killed you."

There seemed no doubt that John, whoever he was, was dying. He seemed to realize it himself, for he got his energies together and called for a priest. "She's my wife," he whispered. And everybody knew he meant the girl singer. "She ran away with this man. And I don't want to cash in my chips till I know she's going to be properly married."

Nobody seemed surprised at this because in the Deadwood of 1876 nobody was surprised at anything. Johnny Behind the Deuce arose from a blackjack game at the end of the auditorium and ran out to get Father Kerner. The priest came on the run. There wasn't much that could surprise him, either.

For all that anything could happen in Deadwood—and generally did—the scene in the Bella Union during the next ten minutes is something unique in the published history of gold camps.

Silently Father Kerner motioned to the crowd to move back, and they did, standing in reverent silence as close to the walls as they could get. Outside the wind howled through the canyon. Inside the flickering candles and lard-oil lamps threw crazy shadows over the close-packed mass of white faces. The girl had fainted unnoticed on the stage. The piano player stood in front of Nuttall, who had blocked his path to a side door. Out in the cleared space in the middle of the floor the priest knelt and heard John's confession and administered the last sacraments. Then presently John was dead.



The priest talked privately with his widow and his killer while the miners shuffled their feet and became more boisterous. And apparently he was suitably impressed by the couple because shortly thereafter they were married in solemn ceremony with Nuttall and a reporter for the *Daily Pioneer* as witnesses.

John was buried next day in the town's original Boot Hill Cemetery. The newly married couple left the Hills and one wishes it were possible to say what happened to them.

Jack Langrishe leased the Bella Union in the eighties for stock-company performances, and for a few years it was fairly respectable. None of Langrishe's biographers seems to have any clear idea of what brought him to Deadwood in the first place. He was a genuinely good actor with a reputation in Europe, as well as in New York. His wife was once a tragedienne of exceptional standing and was still considerably better than average in 1876.

One can explain Mrs. Langrishe's presence in a rioting gold camp because she was a good wife as well as a good actress and followed Jack's lead uncomplainingly. Jack's motivation, if one can make anything out of the legends that confuse his history, must have been something like that of the cello player who hated music. He may have loved the stage but he rebelled at its discipline and frequently he canceled scheduled performances just to go fishing—which he didn't like much either.

Many people are still living in Deadwood who remember his production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which he sometimes presented as 'a matinee attraction. People came from all over the Hills to see it. The show was done seriously with no deviation from the original script until it came time for Little Eva to go to Heaven. Langrishe out in the wings took care of this himself, giving Little Eva a send-off with drums, bells, whistles, birdcalls and thunder and lightning effects.

Sometime in the eighties he moved to a house of his own and after a long career suddenly packed up and left town.

"I want to go someplace where they don't know me," he said. And neither the town nor the Bella Union was ever the same afterward.

When Wild Bill was killed next door the theater was turned over to the citizens' committee for the use of the rump court that tried Jack McCall. This is not surprising because Billy Nuttall had an interest in Number Ten as well as the Bella Union. What does seem strange is that Nuttall was his own business rival. The Bella Union had its own bar and auxiliary amusement parlor which never lost their popularity.

The fact that the coroner was one of the place's most constant habitués never deterred the other customers.

Charlie the Bartender was a principal in the removal of Bummer Dan. This was one of the town's most talked-of homicides with dramatic details worthy of the Bella Union's best traditions.

As later developed in the evidence, Slippery Sam, a faro prestidigitator of low repute, quarreled one night with Charlie over a matter of credit. Sam, apparently, had been given credit previously in some other dive because at the time of his argument in the Bella Union he was drunk enough to be threatening. When he made sure that he wasn't going to get any more whisky from Charlie he drew a pistol. Charlie hit him on the head with a bung starter.

Admittedly this whole transaction is not in strict accordance with the etiquette of barroom fighting. But it had some interesting points. It established that Charlie wasn't averse to a brawl and that he was faster with a bung starter than Slippery Sam with a pistol.

When Sam revived Charlie escorted him personally to the door. At the threshold the bartender delivered a farewell message that could be heard by everybody in the neighborhood.

"I'll be looking out for you, you skunk," he said. (They actually said such things in those days.) "And if you come back here, I'll kill you. As a matter of fact I think that if I ever see you again I'll kill you."

So Slippery Sam moved out into the night and down the street to another bar and there met Bummer Dan, last name unknown, who was what his name implies.

Sam had an immediate idea. "Look," he said to Bummer Dan, "Charlie up at the Bella Union owes me ten dollars and he says he'll have it for me tonight. But I got the aguer coming on and it's cold out. Here, you can wear my overcoat and go up and collect from Charlie and when you get the money I'll give you a dollar. . . ."

So the befuddled Dan accepted the kindly offer and started out for the Bella Union. You have probably guessed that Slippery Sam's overcoat with which he wrapped himself as he leaned against the bitter wind was a loud weave of black and yellow checks cut on the pattern of a minstrel-show raglan. It was, of course, the only one of its kind in the Black Hills. . . .

The law, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, had come to Deadwood, so they tried Charlie the Bartender for the murder of Bummer Dan. But with unassailable logic the jury found him not guilty because he had killed the wrong man.

Kitty LeRoy was one of the Bella Union's favorite entertainers who fulfilled her promise of becoming a queen of tragedy. She fell short of perfection, however, because she failed to die on the premises.

Kitty was a stormy character—just a beautiful, old-fashioned home-loving wildcat who happened to be the toast of the roaring camp. One evening she shot somebody whose name we forget—probably for a good cause. It wasn't murder because Kitty wasn't that good a shot and her impetuous conduct caused her only minor embarrassment. In the Adams Museum collection of unusual documents one finds a letter from the mayor, Mac the Saddler Macdonald, to the chief, ordering him to keep anyone from molesting Miss LeRoy in any way, pending her appearance in court.

A jury after listening to her story gave her back to the theater, or whatever you call it, without the loss of a single working day.

Miss LeRoy had droves of admirers, some of whom had made comfortable fortunes in the gulch, some of whom had not. The trouble with them was that they all looked alike and that wasn't very good. Among the throng was a well and unfavorably known heel named Sam Curley who had one good suit and made enough money gambling to keep his shirt laundered. It seems hardly necessary to mention where Kitty's heart went. They were married by Justice of the Peace Charlie Barker in 1877 and Kitty got a job as a solo dancer at the Gem.

After about a month Sam, who is described in contemporary accounts as "insanely jealous," began to upbraid Kitty about the men in her life. Kitty told him in effect that she didn't propose to sacrifice her art just to be a busy little housewife. Her husband in a huff got aboard the morning stage for Cheyenne.

He came back in the autumn of 1878, looked around vainly for another well-dressed gambler whom he blamed for his troubles and then followed Kitty to the Lone Star House, where she boarded. He broke into her room and shot her dead, after which he killed himself.

Commented a contemporary writer:

She had dressed herself prettily in silks and dainty fluffs and furbelows with the delicate perfumes of the rose and violet like a bride preparing for her wedding. And there in all her subtle beauty and youthful loveliness she lay dying. And close by was the body of her poor, mistaken scoundrel of a husband, with the top of his head blown off.

Deadwood, you gathered, was not so cold and calloused that it couldn't get indignant with a sufficient cause.

# CHAPTER 18

## ACES AND EIGHTS

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DEADWOOD—*State's Attorney McDonald delivered his final answer today to the request of the business men's committee. . . . No gambling will be permitted during "the Days of '76."*—LOCAL NEWS ITEM, JUNE 1948

"On the side of the hill between Whitewood and Deadwood,  
At the foot of a pine stump there lies a lone grave . . ."

—CAPT. JACK CRAWFORD,  
"The Poet Scout."

"Pard, we will meet again in the Happy  
Hunting Grounds to part no more.  
Good-bye . . ."

—COLORADO CHARLIE—(C. H. Utter),  
*An Epitaph*

You have heard before this how Mrs. Annie Tallent, a very worthy woman and the first of her sex to enter the Black Hills, was also the first person of her sex to *leave* the Black Hills. General Crook's cavalry escorted her and a few hundred other gold seekers out of the Indian country to Fort Laramie, whence many of them moved on to Cheyenne. In town at the same time was one James Butler Hickok, a sprightly character about whom members of the Gordon party had heard mention even in Sioux City. He, too, was waiting for a chance to get to French Creek although it could not have occurred to him that he would extend his journeying as far as Mount Moriah. Whatever the revelations he is said to have had, gold was still to be discovered in the northern Hills and Mount Moriah had no existence even as Boot Hill.

Mrs. Tallent met him, of course. It would have violated all the dramatic unities had Mrs. Tallent's special providence failed to arrange for

their brief encounter. The heroine tells of it in her celebrated book *The Black Hills, or Last Hunting Grounds of the Dakotahs*:

. . . One day while walking along the street in Cheyenne with a friend, there appeared, sauntering leisurely toward us from the opposite direction, a tall, straight, and rather heavily built individual in ordinary citizen's clothes—sans revolver and knives, sans buckskin leggings and spurs, sans anything that would betoken the real character of the man—save that he wore a broad brimmed sombrero hat and a profusion of light brown hair hanging over his broad shoulders.

A nearer view betrayed the fact that he also wore a carefully cultivated mustache of a still lighter shade which curled up saucily at each corner of his somewhat sinister looking mouth, while on his chin grew a small tuft of the same shade; and barring the two latter appendages, he might easily have been taken for a Quaker minister.

When within a few feet of us, he hesitated a moment as if undecided, then stepping to one side, he suddenly stopped, at the same time doffing his sombrero and addressed us in respectable Anglo Saxon vernacular substantially as follows:

"Madam, I hope you will pardon my seeming boldness, but knowing you have but recently returned from the Black Hills I take the liberty of asking you a few questions in regard to the country as I expect to go there very soon. My name is Hickok."

I bowed low in acknowledgment of the supposed honor, but I must confess that his next announcement startled me.

"I am called 'Wild Bill,'" he continued, "and you have no doubt heard of me." He paused, then added, "Although I suppose you have heard nothing good of me."

"Yes," I candidly answered, "I have often heard of Wild Bill and his reputation is not at all creditable to him. But," I hastened to add, "Perhaps he is not so black as he is painted."

"Well as to that," he replied, "I suppose I am called a red-handed murderer, which I deny. That I have killed men I admit, but never unless in absolute self-defense, or in the performance of an official duty. I have never in my life taken any mean advantage of an enemy. . . . Yet understand," he added, with a dangerous gleam in his eye, "I never yet allowed a man to get the drop on me. But perhaps I may yet die with my boots on," he concluded, his face softening a little.

Ah! Was this a premonition of the tragic fate that awaited him? After making a few queries relative to the Black Hills, which I politely answered, Wild Bill, with a gracious bow that would have done credit to a Chesterfield, passed on down the street and out of sight.

I neither saw nor heard more of him until the excited cry of "Wild Bill is shot!" was carried along the Main Street of Deadwood. . . .

Thus far Annie Tallent. It is interesting to observe that her monument—an obelisk at Stockade Lake—has lasted longer than Hickok's.

Wild Bill never did much for Deadwood except get killed there, but when you have listened thirty or forty years to evidence in support of his canonization you realize that that was quite a lot. There were dozens of frontier towns in the West where life was cheap and whisky dear. There were no end of gold camps, one cast in the image of the other, where the hope for sudden riches covered everything with synthetic glamour. There were probably a lot of towns in the seventies including Chicago and the Kansas cow capitals where there was an overplus of thugs with short tempers. Wild Bill in dying had given point to the fact that Deadwood was something special, something worthy of the attention of a two-gun demigod—something unique as Virginia City, Nevada, or Shangri-La, among the fabulous treasure houses of the West.

Anybody who goes into the history of the gold-rush boom towns of the post-Civil War period comes early to the idea that they were all filled up with the same population. And so to an amazing extent, they were. Deadwood's largest single immigration in 1876 was the Montana party. Two hundred men, a hundred pack animals and a long wagon train came in with the first rush theoretically from Miles City. Actually they had come from the Montana gold fields, Bannack and Virginia City and Last Chance Gulch and Silver Bow Creek.

They were all experienced miners—as were hundreds who came over the same trail behind them. And they were a species of populace to be found only in very *new* gold camps. Before they turned up to make news in Montana, they had been moving from one bonanza to another in Nevada. Before Nevada they had been in California or the Pike's Peak region. They were true prospectors—fortune was just ahead of you. The gold would be found at the grass roots in some diggings a thousand miles away—only a fool would look for it where he happened to be.

So they continued their rush to look down the next hole until death interrupted them or no new fields were left to be investigated. Somehow they never struck it rich. Visiting Chinamen piled up fair com-

petences reworking their tailings. When they moved on with their endless quest, somebody else found the pockets in the shafts they had sunk. But no matter. They had great expectations. If they didn't get quite to the end of the rainbow they saw a great deal of interesting territory on the way. They lived exciting lives and they had a lot of friends—all just like themselves—most of them living in the same locality at the same time.

The badmen and two-gun marshals and plain homicidal maniacs of the Wild West weren't interested in any gold that had to be dug out of creek beds and tediously washed in a pan. They toiled not, neither did they spin. But it is beyond argument that whenever there was an important strike they followed a course almost exactly similar to that of the miners.

Most of them were gamblers, so it may be that they made the circuit because the suckers were more plentiful in boom towns. They were all supposed to be tough so perhaps they exhibited themselves around the hot spots to maintain their reputations. All of them were professional killers whose field was limited to localities that hadn't yet been named.

So to Deadwood came James Butler Hickok, fresh from deeds of glory in the Abilene sector, to play cards for money or to wait to be tapped for the job of civilizing the northern Hills. Had he lived, had there been no need for numerous other characters to reveal themselves in their eulogies and their public wailing, the world might still be in ignorance of the extent of his competition.

One of the 1876 visitors to Deadwood who came and went without any pieces in the newspapers was Bat Masterson. He was on a south-bound stage heading for Dodge City and home and well out of the Hills on the day when Hickok was shot. We know of his trip through an associate whom he met in Sidney. Wyatt Earp, said to be the fastest pistoleer in America, was on his way in.

Through Earp, rather than through anything recorded by the more permanent residents of the district, we hear of the presence of other early settlers with unsuspected talents. The Deadwood gunmen as a group, he recalled in an interview with his biographer, Stuart Lake, were as good as could be found in any town in the West except, perhaps Tombstone.

And he mentions among others, Seth Bullock the sheriff, Jerry Lewis and John Mann, the marshals, Scott Davis, Boone May, John Bull, Charles Young, Jim Levy, Colorado Charlie Utter, Lew Schoenfield, Tom Hardwick, Tom Dosier, Laughing Sam, Johnny Oyster, Charlie Storms,

Tom Mulqueen, Bill Hillman, Doc Peirce and Charlie Rich, some of whom were working for the new stage company, some just standing around waiting for the lightning to strike. Aptly Rich, Young, Dosier, Lewis, Oyster and Hillman were Wild Bill's pallbearers, and Doc Peirce, sometimes erroneously looked upon as the town clown, laid him out for burial. Earp rated Levy, Storms and Mulqueen as the outstanding gun manipulators of the ensemble. He seems to have overlooked the special gifts of Boone May, who kept himself alive for a long time, and makes no mention of Jesse Brown or Billy Sample or A. M. Willard, all of whom were front-page news until the coming of the railroads drove the stage robbers out of business.

Sam Bass, the legendary one-man plague from Texas, was sitting quietly in the northern Hills at the time. So were Tom Price and Dunc Blackburn and possibly Clay Allison, not to mention cutthroats who had yet to make a reputation. Buffalo Bill Cody made a brief appearance but he didn't count with either the gun aristocracy or the ranking outlaws. The James boys were expected, after the Northfield, Minnesota, bank raid in September 1876, but failed to arrive. They had been forced to take cover in a picturesque glen on the other side of the territory.

There will always be controversy concerning the stature of Wild Bill Hickok in his own profession. One group of historians takes the position that, like Colonel Cody, he was a purely synthetic figure with a manufactured record. On the other side is an enthusiastic cheering section to whom he is the bravest man and the quickest and best shot since the invention of gunpowder.

One gets nowhere trying to take sides in such a controversy. Was Earp or Masterson or Tilghman a better marksman, a cooler head, a smarter tactician or a more marvelous technician? Who knows? The one thing certain in the argument is that while the hot-rod marshals flourished in the land Hickok had a higher rating with the public than any of them except perhaps Earp . . . and Earp had years longer to complete his record.

Another matter that seems to have a bearing on the authenticity of his reputation is the fact that he really did clean up a tough town called Abilene, Kansas, and came out alive. In his time and line of work the strong sometimes survived, the inept never. A professional gunman lives and prospers until he makes his first mistake—and Wild Bill made his in choosing his seat in Number Ten.

D. M. McGaghey, curator of the Adams Museum, adds one important bit to the Hickok legend as it affects the story of Deadwood.



"I have no patience with these long-hairs, these mythical characters in a mythical horse opera that our press agents have contrived for us," he says. "Bill Hickok is another long-hair and we have talked entirely too much about him, too. But at any rate he actually existed. Whether he was good or bad he was really a marshal in Abilene. He came up here and got shot in front of witnesses and we have his body on file up in Mount Moriah Cemetery. He is one historical personage that we can be sure of."

Unlike many of our better-known killers, James Butler Hickok lived an early life that is easy to trace. He was born on a farm in La Salle County, Illinois, in 1837. Like most lads of his time he learned how to handle firearms. In 1856 when he started west he had already acquired an exceptional skill.

The gold seekers were still moving across the plains to California in steadily increasing numbers, many of them outfitting in Kansas City. At that point he got a job driving a wagon in an emigrant train and made a trip to San Francisco. He came back as far as the Rocky Mountain village of Denver and spent the next three years hunting and trapping on the plains. In 1860 he got a job managing a relay station for the Overland Stage Company (running between St. Joseph and Denver) at Rock Springs, Kansas, about fifty miles west of Topeka. The next year he got into the fight that ended with the slaughter of the McCanles "gang" in circumstances that are still the subject of much futile debate.

There is one story that the McCanles outfit were road agents, another that they were patriotic Southerners trying to raise a cavalry unit for the Confederacy. Anyway, it seems Hickok had been told that at four o'clock in the afternoon of July 12, 1861, he would receive a visit from David McCanles and some of his constituents. McCanles came, whether to collect a bill owed him by the Overland Stage Company or to steal horses for the Confederates is one of the major uncertainties in the Hickok myths. At any rate he came and Wild Bill—at the time more generally known as "Duck Bill"—was waiting for him.

J. W. Buel, whose pamphlet "The True Story of 'Wild Bill'" was the first publicity the great gunman ever received, says that in the McCanles party were eight desperadoes armed with pistols, rifles and bowie knives. McCanles' son, William Monroe, who was an eyewitness to the killings at the age of twelve, declared sixty-five years afterward that his father was accompanied by James Woods and James Gordon, neither of whom was armed, and that they were shot down from ambush with Horatius

Wellman, Overland Express agent, assisting. Gordon, according to this account, was killed while lying wounded.

Something of the same version is presented by Charles Dawson in his book *Pioneer Tales of the Oregon Trail* and in an unsigned article in the *Nebraska History Magazine* in 1927. George Ward Nichols, on the other hand, describes the encounter in *Harper's* magazine for February 1867, as a hand-to-hand melee which left six men dead at the door of the Rock Creek Station. This account continuously refers to the hero as "William Hitchcock."

"We do not know how true it be"—any of it. Hickok was arraigned at Beatrice, Nebraska, before a court such as you'd expect to find in the territory, along with Wellman and a hostler named Brink. They were acquitted, whatever that signifies.

It is an established fact that Hickok was seriously wounded. He was thought to be dying when the stage line finally got him to a St. Louis hospital and he was in bed for several weeks. That would seem to indicate that somebody in the McCanles congregation went armed.

He enlisted in the Union Army, became brigade wagon master with General Curtis, fought as a sharpshooter at Pea Ridge, and saw service during the rest of the war as a scout. In 1865 he fought a successful duel with the gambler Dave Tutt in the streets of Springfield and people began to talk about him. He is credited by some historians with one target in Julesburg in the same year—a discussion about where the other man's ace came from. According to an unofficial report his score is augmented by three—Jim Slater, Frank Dowder and Seth Beeber—in 1867 in Jefferson County, Missouri. A fourth one named in the same report as Jack Harness, or Jack Harkaway, was only wounded.

Whether or not this tally is correct, there is no doubt that Hickok's reputation as a polished pistol fighter had been steadily increasing. No one was much surprised when in the fall of 1867 he was invited to be marshal of Hays City, Kansas, then one of the danger spots on the Texas cow trails but not so dangerous as it was to become later.

In pursuit of his new duties he killed Jack Strawhan who until a short time before had been running the town to suit himself. Strawhan had a considerable following but he was slow on the draw. In 1869 Hickok killed Bill Mulvey, a visiting desperado, after Mulvey had the drop on him. In 1870 the Seventh U. S. Cavalry moved into the Hays City area after which his administration of the law got complicated.

Trouble reached a climax one night when a large sergeant got drunk and threatening in Paddy Welch's Saloon. Wild Bill, called to quiet

him, immediately found himself in a fight with fourteen troopers. He seems to have been unarmed at the start of the proceedings but Paddy Welch slipped a pistol to him and in the crush he managed to fire it just once. One of the soldiers was killed. Hickok, wounded three times, got out of town and was well on his way to Junction City when General Phil Sheridan sent out a cavalry detachment to bring him in, dead or alive.

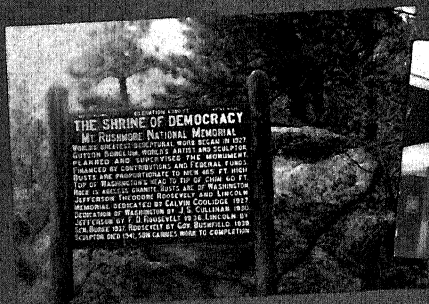
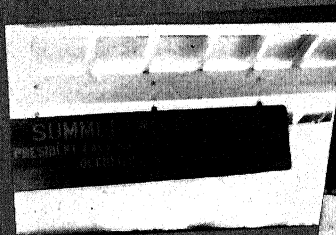
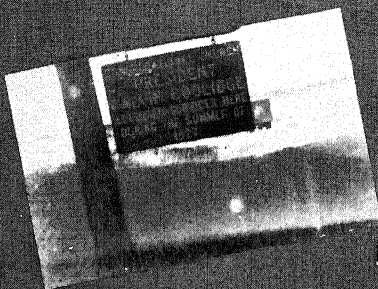
The interlocking directorate of the fates that seem to have governed the actions of all these major characters of the Great West is exemplified in the story of this episode as the graybeards still tell it in Hays City (now Hays), Kansas. The brawl was momentous, according to local legend, because of the fact that the man Hickok shot was an officer—and the brother of General G. A. Custer.

When the Seventh Cavalry left for the Sioux country Wild Bill came back to Kansas but not to Hays. He accepted a new post as city marshal at another exploding Gomorrah called Abilene. He killed Phil Coe, a gambler, as one of his first acts of civic improvement and precipitated another argument over whether the victim had been shot in the front or the back. One might be more interested in this discussion were it not for the fact that Hickok was then at the height of his performance and reputation. He had reached that stage of his career where friends and enemies alike were attending to his publicity and you couldn't believe anything about him. Anyway he never found it necessary to kill anybody else in Abilene. He did kill a cattleman named Bill Thompson in an Ellsworth, Kansas, restaurant and the late Phil Coe's cousin in a saloon in Wichita but these seem to have been personal affairs based on the victims' desire for revenge.

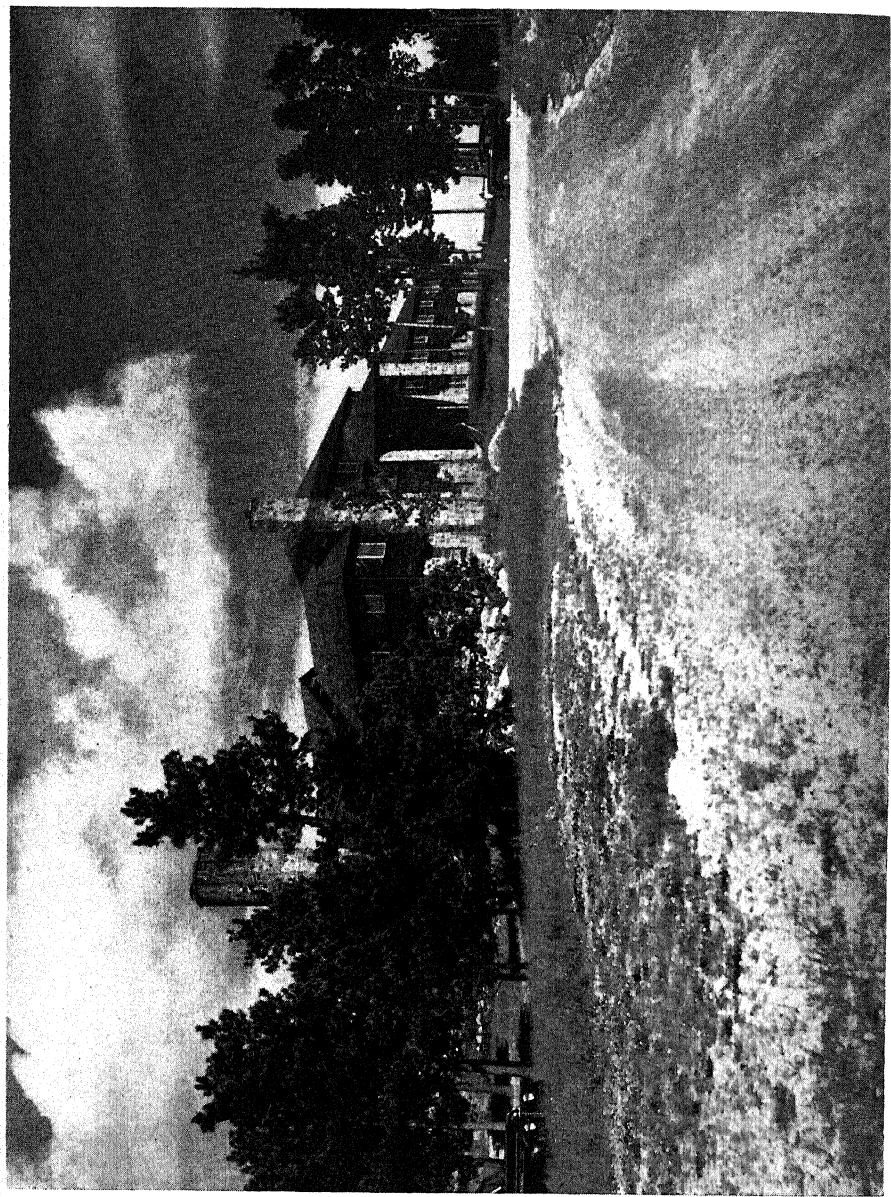
In 1872 Hickok left Abilene which no longer offered any scope for his talents and for two years served with the U. S. Army as a civilian scout in the Indian country. He appeared on the stage in 1874 in one of Ned Buntline's exhibits along with Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack. But he didn't like acting. He abandoned his dramatic career in St. Louis and set out for the Black Hills.

In 1875 he was in Cheyenne, marking time with the rest of the hardy pioneers, when he met not only Annie Tallent, the first etc., but also Agnes Lake, a talented bareback rider, one of the attractions in a visiting circus. In March 1876 he married her.

This, one is constrained to say, was not the result of any love-at-first-sight or whirlwind courtship. Hickok had met Mrs. Lake before, when he was still marshal of Abilene. Meantime, in 1873, her husband, Wil-



Coolidge was here!



liam Lake, proprietor of the show, had been murdered by Jack Keenan at Granby, Missouri. The pair picked up their friendship from the point where they had dropped it in Kansas and for a few weeks seem to have been happily married. Their correspondence discloses no burning passion but much affection that seems real enough despite its phrasing in the language of *The Ready Letter-Writer*.

One of Wild Bill's notes, written the night before he was shot, has been frequently quoted as an indication that he had a premonition of death:

Agnes Darling: If such should be that we never meet again, while firing my last shot I will gently breathe the name of my wife, my Agnes—and with a kind wish, even for my enemies, I will make the plunge and try to swim to the opposite shore. . . .

J. B. Hickok

And there is another, sent from Deadwood two weeks previously, that reached the widow almost at the same time:

July 19, 1876

My Own Darling Wife Agnes:

I have but a few moments left before this letter starts. I was never as well in my life. But you should see me now—just got in from prospecting. Will go away again tomorrow. Will write you again in the morning, but God knows when the letter will start. My friend will take this to Cheyenne if he lives. I don't expect to hear from you, but it is all the same; I know my Agnes and only live to love her. Never mind, Pet, we will have a home yet, and then we will be so happy. I am almost sure I will do well here. The man is hurrying me. Good-bye, Dear Wife. . . .

J. B. Hickok

Wild Bill arrived in Deadwood about the middle of April 1876 with Colorado Charlie Utter with whom he set up a camp near the site of the present C. B. & Q. depot. He did a little prospecting, he did a little poker playing—mostly in Number Ten because he knew Harry Young, the bartender there. He minded his own business. And even according to present-day standards he would probably have been rated an exemplary citizen.

He made many friends, particularly among the customers of Number Ten. His society was much sought after by a coterie of gunmen and he

was pleasant with them but wary. As a professional he realized that almost any of them would be willing to kill him for a chance to claim the six-shooter championship. He publicly disarmed six Montana triggermen who had threatened him and they remained hostile, if quiet.

In the end he was slaughtered by a nobody, partly because he was careless and partly because his percentage under the law of averages had run out.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, August 2, 1876, he sat down to play poker at his accustomed table in Number Ten. Also in the game were Carl Mann, one of the proprietors of the place, Captain Frank Massey, a former Missouri River pilot, and Charles Rich, a professional gunman.

It was only partly Wild Bill's fault that he sat with his back to the door. Charlie Rich testified at the inquest that he had taken his usual seat against the wall just to plague him. Hickok demurred for a time but eventually took the chair that was left.

The game was proceeding quietly when Jack McCall came ambling in casually from the street. He moved over to the bar, bought a drink from Harry Young, drank it, wiped his mustache on the back of his hand and sauntered toward the door. This brought him to a point only about two feet from the card table where he swung about with a .45 Colt in his hand and shot Wild Bill through the back of the head.

The cards he had been holding slipped from the dead man's fingers to the floor where they lay face up—Aces and eights, forever after and everywhere the "Dead Man's Hand."

### FUNERAL NOTICE

Aug. 3, 1876

Died in Deadwood, Black Hills, August 2, 1876, from the effects of a pistol shot, J. B. Hickok (Wild Bill) formerly of Cheyenne, Wyo. Funeral services will be held at Charlie Utter's camp, this afternoon, Aug. 3, at 3 p.m.

All are respectfully invited to attend.

# CHAPTER 19

## TRIAL OF JACK McCALL

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DEADWOOD—J. P. McWhosis was given a month in jail and fined \$100 and costs yesterday for drunken driving. When arrested he was trying to park his car in front of a fireplug.—NEWS ITEM, 1948

No cause célèbre in the history of American jurisprudence should be known better than that of Jack McCall. Wild Bill, now resting under his third monument on Mount Moriah, has been undisturbed these many years but at least three times a week during the summer it has become an old Deadwood custom to resurrect the assassin and give him another fair trial. It is significant, however, that no matter how much study has been given the case by local impresarios—no matter how frequently the crime has been re-enacted, nobody has ever yet figured out why Jack McCall did it.

The killer was out the door almost before anybody knew what had happened. The bullet had gone through Hickok's head to wound Captain Massey in the arm and he staggered to his feet leading other customers to believe that there had been a fight at the card table.

But despite the delay it didn't take long for an amateur posse to find McCall. He had got no farther than an empty barn across the street. It was a mad day for Deadwood. Captain Massey started the confusion in the south end of town by running out of Number Ten, holding his bleeding arm and shouting, "Wild Bill shot me." So men rushed to their guns and women bolted their doors as the news flashed up Main Street that Hickok the killer had gone berserk.

Several minutes went by before any of the witnesses to the shooting could be made to talk coherently. Then horsemen galloped up through the gulches crying out another message: "Wild Bill is shot! Wild Bill is dead!" Miners left their diggings up along Whitewood, Deadwood,



Blacktail and Gold Run and came pouring into the canyon, and it was a fine afternoon for the saloons.

McCall went peaceably to the jail, such as it was. A citizens' committee was called to meet at the Bella Union Thursday morning. A coroner's jury sat with C. M. Sheldon presiding as foreman. Hickok's body was taken across the creek to Utter's camp where E. T. "Doc" Peirce, a volunteer undertaker began to prepare it for the morrow's funeral. Knots of subdued people were gathering on the street corners or in bars ready to take part in a lynching and fearful of some bloody demonstration on the part of the dead man's friends. The whole community was fluttery and rapidly getting drunk when there came another fine show to complete the day's pageant of exhibitionism.

Up in the Hills somewhere, Brick Pomeroy, a freighter looking for some strayed oxen, ran into an Indian whom he killed. Francisco Mores, a Mexican bullwhacker in Pomeroy's outfit, decapitated the corpse, leaped aboard his horse and started for Deadwood. He came into town at the gallop, shrieking hysterically and swinging the gory head in a wide arc by its long black hair.

For all its sophistication the community had never seen anything like this. The excited spectators might have been pleased by a spectacle that so nearly fitted their mood. But they didn't know precisely what it meant. Presently a new alarm was echoing through the canyon. "The Indians are coming! The Indians are coming!" Then there was more incoherent screaming followed by another rush to homes and rifles.

Doc Peirce, working over the body of Wild Bill in a teepee at Charlie Utter's camp, heard the commotion and figured that the lynching bee was getting under way. He dropped his tools and headed back toward Number Ten.

He pushed his way into the crowd on lower Main Street and found that Deadwood, exhausted by a new panic, had no longer any thought of executing McCall. Wild Bill Hickok for the moment was forgotten. . . . There wasn't going to be any Indian raid. This fine man on the horse had come to tell them that there wasn't going to be any Indian raid. He had killed an Indian. He had the Indian's head to show for it. . . . In a new outburst of hysteria men went about through the throng passing their hats to collect money for this heroic bullwhacker who had killed the Indian.

Peirce waited till they had gathered about seventy dollars' worth of dust for Señor Mores and returned to his lonesome vigil with Wild Bill. He was just a little resentful about the town's reaction to the whole busi-

ness. It looked to him like pretty bad taste for the bullwhacker to come busting into the limelight at a sad solemn moment like this. People like Wild Bill Hickok didn't get killed in Deadwood every day—and what did one Indian more or less amount to?

This Mexican with his Indian head had made people forget all about lynching Jack McCall. Everybody was pawing over him like he was a hero. Well, not to Doc Peirce, he confided to Charlie Utter. To Doc Peirce he was the swell head who was going to be strutting around town tomorrow, stealing the show from Wild Bill and his funeral. He was just a so-and-so nuisance that the half-witted people of Deadwood were going to keep around as long as he wanted to stay.

He was wrong about that. Señor Mores went out to spend his prize money that night and got killed by a Crook City gambler who didn't want to give houseroom to the detached Indian head.

Wild Bill Hickok had a well-attended funeral. Thousands of people marched by the coffin where he was laid out in a new dress suit, new starched shirt and collar and flowing black tie. His favorite Sharp's rifle lay in the box beside him. Virtually all of Deadwood plodded along behind the gunmen-pallbearers to the grave that Charlie Utter had prepared for him. Then everybody went back to town and the Bella Union to find out what was going to be done with the man who had killed him.

Many people have wondered at the pompous nonsense with which Deadwood City surrounded the trial of Jack McCall. The citizens' committee, which is to say everybody who could get into the theater, took a solemn vote and named W. Y. Kuykendall judge; Isaac Brown, sheriff; Colonel May, prosecuting attorney. The defendant was permitted to select a defense attorney. A subcommittee of three was named to prepare a list of thirty-three names for a venire. One of this jury commission lived in Montana.

Except for the fact that a man's life was affected by it, all of this procedure meant about as much as a high-school fraternity initiation. For the point of the matter was that there was no law in Deadwood—or anywhere else in the Black Hills—save in the eye of the beholder. Nobody had come into the region save in violation of a Federal order. The town was outlawed and would remain so until June 1877.

Nevertheless the citizens' committee toiled along with its weighty program like the Weehawken Women's Club getting ready to send a strong protest to the Grand Lama.

On August 5 the *Deadwood Pioneer* gave an account of the proceedings:

On Wednesday about three o'clock the report was started that J. B. Hickok, "Wild Bill," was killed. On repairing to the hall of Nuttall and Mann, it was ascertained that the report was too true. We found the remains of Wild Bill lying on the floor. The murderer Jack McCall was captured after a chase by many citizens and a guard placed over him. As soon as this was accomplished, a coroner's jury was summoned. . . .

Preparations were then made by calling a meeting of the citizens at the theater building. . . . [The election of court officers is described in detail.]

At two o'clock the trial commenced and lasted until six that evening. The defense was that the deceased, at some place in Kansas killed the prisoner's brother for which he killed the deceased.

The jury, after being out for one hour and thirty minutes, returned the following verdict: "Deadwood City, August 3rd, 1876—We, the jury, find Mr. John McCall not guilty." Signed, Charles Whitehead, foreman, J. J. Bump, J. H. Thompson, J. F. Cooper, K. F. Towle, L. A. Judd, L. D. Bookaw, S. S. Hopkins, Alexander Thayre, J. E. Thompson, Ed Burke and John Mann.

McCall, who had no idea that Hickok's friends would appreciate the verdict, rode out of town immediately, joined a south-bound freighting outfit and went to Cheyenne. There he got drunk, and when he was drunk he talked too much. He admitted that he had had no provocation for killing Wild Bill—that Wild Bill hadn't ever met, much less killed, his brother. He was overheard by a deputy U. S. marshal who suddenly realized that the man was confessing to a murder in a region where murder was recognized as breach of the peace.

So McCall was arrested and taken to Yankton, capital of the Dakota Territory, for trial. The hearing which began on November 27, 1876, less than four months after the killing, lasted several days. He said nothing about the alleged killing of his brother in this trial but instead swore that John Varnes a gambler had hired him to remove Hickok. Investigators could find nothing to substantiate this story, including Varnes. So McCall was convicted of first-degree murder, and on March 1, 1877, he was hanged. From the time he put the pistol to Hickok's head until the trap dropped under him at Yankton he hadn't said anything about the motivation of the affair that made sense.

Virtually every student of Black Hills history has discarded the story of the murdered brother. It is just too obviously synthetic.

There was a story, once given some credence, that McCall was smarting under an insult received from Bill at the poker table. As against

this the evidence at the inquest and before Kuykendall's rump court tended to show that Wild Bill had never known him.

Some of Hickok's biographers present the theory that "the better element" of Deadwood had invited him in to clean up the town as he had cleaned Abilene and that the worried riffraff had brought about his assassination. This might be plausible were it not for the presence in the community of so many first-class professionals ready, if not anxious, to see Wild Bill out of circulation. Why should the thug element, which certainly knew these facts of life, have chosen as their executioner such a specimen as Jack McCall?

McCall was no gunman. A test of his revolver after his arrest showed that the only live cartridge of the six in the cylinder was the one that had killed Hickok. Had one of the five defective shells instead of the single good one been under the hammer when he pulled the trigger in Number Ten he would never have lived until March 1, 1877.

In Cheyenne on the night when he got drunk with the deputy marshal as an audience one refrain kept running through his conversation: "I killed the biggest gunman in the world." And there, probably, you can leave speculation about Mr. McCall. He was a sort of Mr. Mitty who suddenly decided to take a speaking part in one of his own day-dreams. . . . Only he failed to wake up in time.

The town had spread out across the creek as far as possible by 1878 and Boot Hill lay in the path of progress. A new cemetery was laid out high on the cliffside. And there Wild Bill's body, along with the remains of others who had failed to survive the gold country's weird morals, was laid in a new resting place.

A lifesize statue showing him holding his hat instead of his gun was placed over him. It was removed, chip by chip, by souvenir hunters, and a new specimen of frontier sculpture replaced it around 1910. Neither of these two stone images has proved as durable as Wild Bill himself, but then he never had much to do with tourists.

## CHAPTER 20

### GREEN PASTURES

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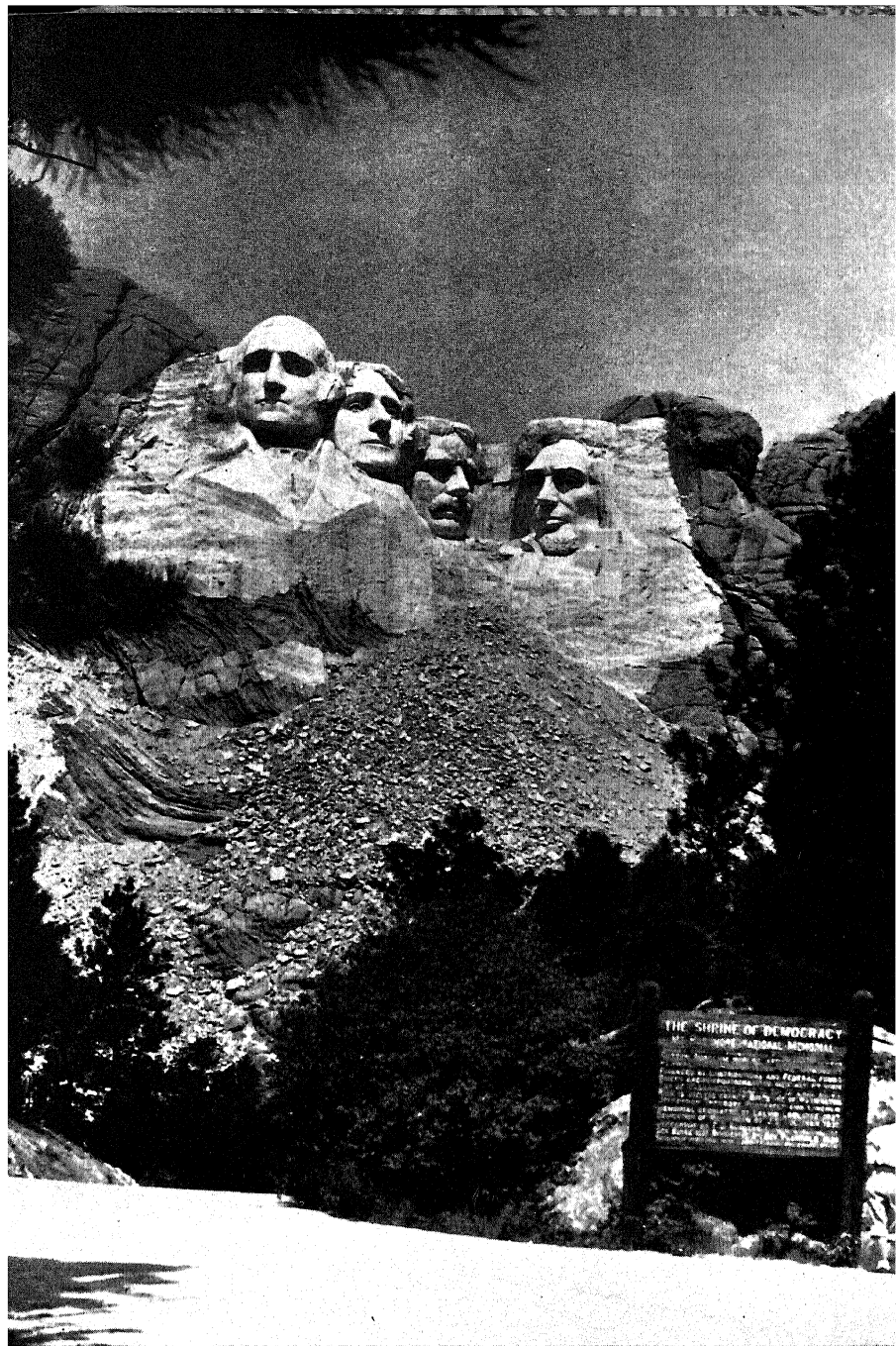
DEADWOOD—*The busiest locality in Deadwood unquestionably was Grabill's art gallery which establishment was thronged the live-long day. Where the people came from was a mystery to the reporter. It is an interesting place to visit, strewn as it is with works of art and the largest and handsomest collection of Black Hills views ever offered to the public. Mr. Grabill is a thorough workman and has completely mastered the instantaneous process by which rapidly moving objects are faultlessly presented.*

—*Lead Daily Call*, August 16, 1888

ONE of the things most noticeable about all the memoirs that have come from the West's more virulent hellholes is the kindly tolerance of the writers toward all their interesting fellow creatures. Nobody was very bad in those communities, you find out, even though the vigilantes were constrained to hang about half of them. They were really good at heart. . . . They didn't mean to steal and cheat and lie and commit a murder or two. It was just that they were filled up with a lot of innocent boyish spirit.

It occurs to you that some of these books were written, if not lived, by lads who were definitely as hard as diamonds in the rough. In many particulars they demonstrate themselves to be keen, alert observers, utterly devoid of maudlin sentiment, and reading their reports you begin to wonder. Were these able commentators wearing blinders throughout their early years or has history been deceiving us?

Common sense indicates the answer is neither. Offhandedly it looks as if sweet charity, Christian forbearance and some Americanized sketches of Speak-No-Evil, Hear-No-Evil, See-No-Evil have been crammed into frontier reminiscence mostly on account of conscience and remorse. Let us go lightly with the members of the blind men's cattle



The Four Faces, from Horsethief Lake Road.



Stockade Lake.

association who went around branding calves in the dark. . . . Maybe they've got some record of that time we unloaded that sluice box up at Pactola. . . .

Tom Sweeney, gone these many years, was one of the hardheaded realists who didn't care much for books about *My Glorious Years on the Old Wahoo Range* or, *My Glorious Years with Pick, Pan and Pemican*.

"Sure they're filled with all sorts of characters," he said when I asked him why he didn't write one of them himself. "But why read about 'em?

"Son, a gold rush or a land boom is just like one of these prize assortments the stamp companies try to sell to kids: 'The Giant Package! A thousand stamps, all different for only twenty-five cents.' Well, you get the thousand stamps, all right. And they're all different except they've got the same faces on 'em you've been looking at for years. And they're all two-centers and they're all canceled.

"There aren't so many people can look at last year's calendar without blushing."

Tom, in the course of a long life in the Hills, had known a lot of people. It would be nice to be able to tell him also how right he was about the influences that make some sort of folklore.

Whatever the variety of the folks who clamored to break into the land of milk and honey and Indian massacre in the middle seventies, they were definitely no marchers to Zion. There weren't any churches in the new communities for a long time. And except for the fact that bullwhackers, muckers, woodcutters and the like demanded that they be paid on a specified day every week nobody would have known when it was Sunday. What might have been the Sabbath was just another day to work or to get drunk depending on your social position. Everett Dick in *The Story of the Frontier* quotes a Helena, Montana, miner: "Good society and morals are strangers to this country." And that will do for the Black Hills towns of '76, too.

Dick cites a report of the first funeral in Custer City. One must remember that this event happened in 1876 after the bulk of the town's population had joined the new rush to Deadwood. But there were between 300 and 400 inhabitants still present when a young man was caught in the cave-in of a dugout and smothered. The mayor called for a minister but there was no minister. He found some professional men, engineers, lawyers, a doctor, and he requested that one of them say a few appropriate words and recite some prayers at the graveside.



None of them thought he was qualified. The mayor polled the community and couldn't find a Bible. So far as he could determine there wasn't a man or woman in the town who had ever been a communicant of any faith.

He made one more plea for someone to help give the boy a semblance of Christian burial. And then, finally, after about two hours of exhortation he got an answer. A girl produced a pocket Bible—the only one in Custer City.

Apathy more than direct antagonism seems to have been the chief factor in the Black Hills country's attitude toward religion. Missionaries of all faiths seem to have been treated generally not only with tolerance but with respect. Men of the cloth may have been the objects of mild jokes but they were never molested. And of course nobody shot at them because, as Mr. McClintock points out, only folks who had claim boundaries to argue about were eligible for murder.

The first minister to hold a regular service in Deadwood seems to have been the Reverend Mark Rumney who deserves a better place in local legend than many historians have given him. The Reverend Mr. Rumney, who came to the Hills in the spring after the killing of Preacher Smith, was neither shocked nor impressed by the hardness of the people who slopped about in Deadwood's only street. He was made of fairly tough fiber himself, and a mining camp had little to offer that he hadn't seen before. He had gone through the Civil War as a colonel in the Georgia infantry. He had fought at Kenesaw Mountain and in the siege of Atlanta. And gunshots in the mountain air did not disturb him. He was lean and erect, walked with a military bearing and looked like a colonel. Most of the town was really proud of him.

His friends were many and his parishioners were few, so it is hardly surprising that he came one day to Billy Nuttall and asked why he couldn't get the use of some local building for Sunday services. His choice of an ear could hardly be considered accidental because Mr. Nuttall had widespread real-estate interests. He owned most of the Bella Union, now leased to Jack Langrishe. He was a partner in Number Ten. And he was said to have a share in other worthy enterprises.

"Look," he said to the Reverend Mr. Rumney, "I'll let you have the 'Melodeon' for your performance from nine-thirty to ten-thirty next Sunday and if it suits you, you can come every Sunday. And you can use our organ. All we ever used it for was to get the name off it."

The preacher was pleased. He thanked Mr. Nuttall earnestly and went away to canvass a possible congregation.

He was under no illusions about the Melodeon. It was a gambling house and one of the most notorious dives of its kind in town and its activities hadn't been kept secret from the man in the street. Mr. Rumney didn't believe, either, that Mr. Nuttall was making his kind offer just to assist in the promotion of religion. But what of that. Mr. Nuttall might be a gambler and a prankster but he was also a temple builder—and the only one in Deadwood.

Came the day, and also Mr. Rumney and his congregation—about four men and three women whom history fails to identify. The little group, all of whom save Mr. Rumney looked a little dubious, were courteously received by Mr. Nuttall and his customers. The dealers and faro players and whisky consumers voluntarily stopped whatever they were doing and helped push the tables and other paraphernalia back against the wall to make room for the worshipers, and all of this was done without resentment at the interruption or any sign of irreverence.

The Reverend Mr. Rumney bowed his head in prayer and for the first time since it was slapped together the Melodeon was silent. He preached what Nuttall afterward declared was the best sermon he had ever heard in his life. . . . A simple text—"I shall lift up mine eyes to the hills . . ." and applicable. The congregation sang a few old hymns in which one or two of Nuttall's clients joined.

When the service was finished, the bartender took up a sizable collection and presented it to the Reverend Mr. Rumney. And then for the first time since the minister's opening prayer, the decorous hush of the place was broken. Cutting through it like a dull saw came the voice of "Nutshell Bill," the faro dealer.

"Come on! Come on!" he called. "This is a great day, a great day. The reverend here has told you all about how you can save your souls. Well, just step up here and I'll tell you all how to win some money."

Everybody thought the services had been very satisfactory but for some reason the Melodeon did not continue very long as a church. The Reverend Mr. Rumney died the next year near Rochford.

Whether they were the godless lot who figured in the news reports of the seventies or the erratic but kindly old gentlemen of the reminiscences, the boys of the mining camps had two unbeatable qualities—a sense of fairness and a genuine regard for courage. If you keep that in mind you may be able to understand why one of the great heroes of legendary Deadwood, proudly enshrined in public regard alongside Wild Bill and Calamity Jane, is a pleasant unassuming figure named Preacher Smith.

The Reverend Henry Weston Smith came into the Hills with the first wave and the earliest mention of him is found in the diary of George V. Ayers of Deadwood on May 7, 1876:

Weather cold and stormy. Went to first church service held in Custer City this morning. The Rev. Smith of the Methodist persuasion preached. He took his text from Psalm 34:7 and preached a very interesting sermon. The congregation consisted of about thirty gentlemen and five ladies, all of whom paid strict attention to the sermon except when there was a dog-fight outside.

Preacher Smith left Custer a week later, some months before the mayor looked vainly for somebody to conduct a funeral service. He traveled with Captain C. V. Gardner who was conducting a bull train to Deadwood. He walked the seventy-odd miles, earning his keep by helping the cook and doing other odd jobs about the train.

In Deadwood he supported himself by manual labor, preaching on street corners on Sundays and at night. A historical marker identifies the spot where he delivered his last sermon a few yards removed from Number Ten and the Bella Union. At first he met complete apathy, and so few people stopped at his sidewalk meetings that he seemed to be talking to himself. Then a few drunks halted to hear his message and after that an occasional sourdough with nothing else to do. So presently he had a fairly large following. Deadwood took him to its bosom just as incongruously as it did everything else. The sinners, apparently, got some consolation out of hearing somebody tell them how bad they were. Preacher Smith worked on their heartstrings and made them feel sad and they loved him like a sort of court jester in reverse.

On August 20 he preached his usual Sunday morning sermon in Deadwood and announced to the keeper of the rooming house where he lived, that he was going to Crook City, twelve miles away in the east slope of the Hills, to hold afternoon services.

The landlord tried to dissuade him. "Lots of Indians are reported on that trail," he said. "Have you got a gun?"

Preacher Smith answered that his Bible would be protection enough—and it probably would have been save for the fact that the Sioux killed him before they noticed that he had it.

Charles Pfrunder, a rancher, found his body five miles out of Deadwood on the road to Crook City. A party of armed men rode out to bring it back to town. The preacher's street-corner congregation gave him an elaborate funeral. C. E. Hawley, a layman, delivered the sermon.

He mentioned in his discourse that Smith's body had not been scalped or otherwise mutilated. When found the preacher was lying on his back with his pocket Bible in his outstretched hand. And the inference was plain to Mr. Hawley and, apparently, to his listeners.

"This good man, our brother, met the Indians," he said. "And he was not afraid because God had him in His right hand. The Indians, the murdering hounds, have respect for what they call 'Blackrobes' or 'God-men.' Our brother pulled out his Bible to show these Indians that he was a Godman. But like so many of us who come to a showdown with death he wasn't quick enough.

"They shot him before they saw the Bible. And then they made up for their mistake the best way they could. They left his body untouched with his Bible in his hand to show his friends that they hadn't intended to kill a man of God and a man of peace as brave as Preacher Smith. . . ."

The Indians were out to plague Deadwood that day. Other men besides Preacher Smith were attacked on the road. Cattle had been stampeded at the end of Centennial Valley. And the town began to fill up with ranchers who feared a raid in force. Toward the end of the day some friends brought in the body of Charles Mason who had been tomahawked out on the mesa toward the north. Just to save time his funeral was held at the same time as that of Mr. Smith and the two were buried in the same grave.

The editor of the *Pioneer* was somewhat critical of this arrangement which he called "misguided economy," but some years later, when it was decided to move Preacher Smith to a new resting place on Mount Moriah, identification of his unmarked grave was made possible merely because he shared it with the battered Mason.

In 1883 a letter was received in Deadwood from Preacher Smith's daughter Edna to ask about the chances for earning a living in the Hills. She disclosed a lot of the tragic history of his family that he had never mentioned to his gold-camp friends. He was the youngest of three brothers, she wrote, and all three of them had died by violence.

Ill luck had dogged the years of his ministry. What another man might have taken for a series of discouraging experiences in the Deadwood of 1876 gave him his first hope. He had written that he was getting good wages for his manual labor in the camp and that his floating congregations were rough but kind. Out of what he earned and what he got through the generosity of the miners he saved enough for the stage fares and incidental expense that would bring his family out to the Hills.

He sent the money along in mid-July, but it never got to Mrs. Smith. The pony express rider carrying the mail was robbed and murdered near Cheyenne. The preacher's accompanying letter was found with others scattered about near the victim's body. It was forwarded with an explanatory note from the express company. But no trace of the money was ever found.

All of Deadwood's early settlers reacted instantly to Edna Smith's message. A letter was sent to the widow inviting her and her two daughters to come and live in "the friendly Hills" where all who had known Preacher Smith would be her "brothers and sisters." A large-scale subscription was begun to provide the funds. The raffle of a twenty-dollar gold piece aroused a town where every third or fourth building was a gambling house.

It proved to be an immensely popular cause. Marvin Hughitt, president of the Chicago and North Western Railway, sent passes for the whole family to Pierre and stage transportation from that point to Deadwood. The local board of education made a place for Edna Smith on the teaching staff. The whole venture had been oversubscribed when the impulsive pioneers got an answer to their letter of invitation.

Miss Smith was deeply touched by the kindness of her father's Deadwood friends. But there were reasons why they couldn't express their thanks in person. Mrs. Smith was an invalid. Edna herself was ill. At the moment they could not possibly make the long, fatiguing journey. But at another day perhaps . . .

The members of the Deadwood fund-raising committee held a meeting and decided to forward the money they had collected anyway. They got a pathetic note of thanks from Edna. Someday, God willing, she would be able to come out to this warm and generous city and look at the monument that marked the scene of her father's death and to say a prayer at the side of his grave. It would be such a sad pleasure for her to look at the life-size image of Preacher Smith now being hewed out of native sandstone by the same sculptor who had carved the celebrated likeness of Wild Bill! But there the story of the Smith family ends. Neither Edna Smith nor her mother ever came to the Hills. They never wrote again. And one by one the pioneers who had known Preacher Smith were carried up to Mount Moriah to lie beside him.

What remained of the sculptured image of the preacher fell down not so long ago. Like the statue of Wild Bill it had been hacked and battered by souvenir hunters until it bore no resemblance even to a bad specimen of frontier art.

# CHAPTER 21

## LADY IN BUCKSKIN PANTS

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DEADWOOD—Miss Nellie Riley, Deadwood, who was crowned queen of the Paha-Sapa carnival at the Olympics Club rooms Friday Evening, desires to express her thanks to the numerous friends who cast their ballots for her during the contest.

—Deadwood Pioneer-Times, August 16, 1908

LONG ago somebody asked me, "Who was Calamity Jane?" And the answer was simple. I had the legend pat, complete with names, dates, addresses and bibliography. Today if anyone were to ask me the same question the answer would still be simple: "I don't know."

There shouldn't be any complexities about Martha Jane Canary White Burke. She came to the Hills with a bull train in '76, dressed in the leather costume of a frontiersman. Her garb, her voice, her native talents and her saloon habits made her a center of attention even in so critical a neighborhood as Deadwood. Some contemporaries mention that she was at that time a woman of considerable beauty and charm. This information is offered for what it is worth.

She stayed around Deadwood until the fall of 1877, moved over to Sturgis when the Seventh Cavalry came in to establish Fort Meade, and traveled with the freighting outfits between Fort Pierre and Sturgis until 1881 when she transferred her interests to Miles City, Montana.

She came back to Deadwood in 1895 after an absence of seventeen years and except for two or three expeditions with carnival shows remained there constantly until her death in 1903.

One of the more patent facts about her is that she was neither a myth nor a shrinking violet. For whatever good it did her, she was out in the public eye during fairly recent years. She was known literally to thousands of people a large number of whom must be still alive. You might think that some of them would be able to tell her story without a sob

in the voice or a leer on the lip. But if they can they never seem to get around to it.

Like Wild Bill in whose lengthening shadow she sleeps on Mount Moriah she has caused considerably more controversy dead than she ever did in life. Nobody seems to have thought it worth his time to analyze her character when she was rebounding from bar to bar in Main Street. To the average unbiased observer she must have seemed pretty obvious—and anyway you don't start nominating anybody for sainthood until after death. But her neighbors—some of them—began along about 1905 to see her as a person entirely different from what they'd suspected. After reading a few Chamber of Commerce biographies, all of them did.

One school of thought holds that she was a cross between Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth of Hungary, devoting her life to the care of the poor and ailing. Proponents of this doctrine get very angry when you mention that she ran around with a lot of strange company. What other kind of company, they inquire, could she have found in Deadwood?

The opposing faction is just as cocksure and just as bigoted and, in addition, inclined to be a bit vicious: She was just another one of the girls, they declare, only a little uglier. At the time she was supposed to be nursing smallpox cases she was in jail for picking a drunk's pocket. She was a female bum. And if you venture to argue with *them* they get angry too. . . . Suppose the whole town did turn out to her funeral, they would want to know. What of it? Wouldn't the Deadwood of 1903 still turn out for anybody who'd been inside the city limits for more than five years?

As usual, the truth is somewhere between these two opinions. And as usual when extremists get to opposing one another it is going to be difficult to find. There are some puzzling things about Calamity Jane that aren't going to be solved by denying her existence.

It is simple to observe that she was an ordinary harlot no different from other women who traveled with bullwhackers and frequented army camps, no different from about ninety per cent of the women in Deadwood. Maybe she was, but for all that she was the only woman Mike Russell would allow to linger in his saloon—and that included the mayor's wife or Annie Donna Tallent. Until the day of her death she was the only woman who knew what the back room of the Bodega looked like. If she was one with the other frail sisters, three stalwart citizens like Mike Russell, Percy Russell and John Tierney don't seem to have known about it.

When she came back to Deadwood in 1895 she was considerably more notorious than she had ever been before. Whatever beauty she might have had seventeen years before was gone. Estelline Bennett who witnessed her arrival describes her as a plain woman looking older than her years. But it wasn't the riffraff who met her at the railroad station. Dressed as if they were on their way to attend a society wedding were General A. R. Z. Dawson, Porter Warner of the *Deadwood Times*, William Bonham of the *Pioneer*, Mike Russell, Dr. Babcock and George Ayers. They bowed to her as if they were greeting a queen and took her hand with the obvious pleasure of old friends. . . . Belle Haskell, directress of the Green Front, could come and go as often as she pleased without anyone to watch her save Harvey Fellows who met the trains with the Spearfish stage.

Martha Jane Canary (or Cannary) was born in 1850 near Princeton, Missouri. This is the only part of her published autobiography that looks authentic although other writers say she was born in other places and at different times. Most of the accounts of her early life are just as apocryphal as her own.

In *The Black Hills Trails*, by Jesse Brown and A. M. Willard, we read that she was the daughter of a Baptist minister. From the same source we get the information that she made her first trip west when she was fifteen years old with an army lieutenant on an expedition to Wyoming. You hear elsewhere, rather vaguely, that her mother, remarried to a former soldier named John Hart, found her in Wyoming and took her to Salt Lake City. About then she seems to have broken home ties for good. She skittered away to Rawlins, Wyoming, and became the playmate of a cavalry outfit. She learned how to handle horses and mules and how to tie a diamond hitch, then put on men's clothes and got a job as a civilian packer in a government train. At Hat Creek Station she got drunk and was fired.

She was married around 1866 in Cheyenne to George White who took her to Denver and dressed her up in silks and satins. They lived at the best hotels and frequented the best bars. But Jane didn't like it. One afternoon she left a note on the dresser for her husband and went away. She was at Fort Bridger in 1867, Piedmont, Wyoming, 1868, Fort D. A. Russell, 1868, and then followed the Seventh Cavalry south. She tarried awhile at Hays City, Kansas, where she was long remembered.

The moving-picture scenarists who have so diligently tried to compromise her in an affair with Wild Bill might well have made capital of this episode, for in 1868, at the time of Jane's appearance in Hays,



Wild Bill was town marshal. The situation was filled with possibilities for romance save for one fact. The record shows that Hickok had left Hays City to guide former Vice-President Henry Wilson and his wife through the Western territories. It is quite likely he never saw her until she appeared in the Black Hills.

Apparently she spent a little time in towns along the advancing route of the Kansas-Pacific Railroad. But she came back north around 1875. There is a stirring legend of how she put on her old uniform in Cheyenne and rode out on the Black Hills trail and slipped into a column of Crook's cavalry during the night. As the story goes she was detected and escorted to and from French Creek under guard. If the story is true, she and the members of the Gordon party must have been interesting company for one another on the way back to Cheyenne.

Somewhere along her devious path Martha Jane Canary learned how to ride and shoot—not so well, perhaps, as her autobiography might lead one to believe, but better than average. Whatever may have been her purely feminine attractions in those days of her wandering, she must certainly have had some dominant male traits aside from her ability to swear. She had considerable strength in her arms and shoulders and an amazing endurance.

A popular author of Western lore in the eighties, one Edward L. Wheeler, made frequent mention of her in a whole series of books. In one of these works called *The Miner Sport*, she is quoted on the subject of her identity at some length. Wounded in an election riot she lies unrecognized in her male attire and unaided until picked up by Miss Bessie Burt, a young washwoman.

Their conversation, faithfully recorded by Author Wheeler, follows: "Who are you?" Bessie asked.

"I am Bumblebee Bob. . . ."

"You are a woman in male disguise!" Bessie asserted.

The wounded person gave a start.

"I supposed my disguise was impenetrable" was the reply. "But I know you will bring me no harm. Your face is too good to belong to a cruel or heartless person. I am a woman—I am Calamity Jane, the wife of Deadwood Dick. . . ."

And so, it turned out, she was—during at least sixty-four volumes of the *Deadwood Dick Library*. She doesn't seem to have been any more fictional in this role than in any others with which local conversation has supplied her.

The anonymous author of the *Montana State Guide* book observes

that she was able to engage actively in the dangerous life of the camps and not only compete with the men in their own field but actually surpass them. "Certainly," he observes, "she was not the Calico Cat type of female camp follower. She was given to shooting up saloons and raising hell with tongue and quirt." And there you have another observation on what sort of a person was Calamity Jane.

In her own story she says that she got the name "Calamity" from Captain Patrick Egan, whose life she saved in a skirmish at Goose Creek, Wyoming Territory. Captain Egan replied to this that he never spoke to the woman in his life except to order her off a military post for disciplinary reasons.

She says, moreover, that she was with General Custer on his first expedition into the Hills in 1874. But in this it seems very likely that she is mistaken. Somebody would surely have noticed her.

Whatever she had been doing between her sojourn in Hays City and her appearance in Cheyenne toward the end of 1875, she got to the northern Hills about the same time Wild Bill did in 1876. And there you have the beginning and the end of what the cinema press agents called a great romance. It is quite likely that she knew Hickok and that Hickok knew her. Doc Peirce once said that in the Deadwood of '76, where the one street was filled with mud and logs and stumps, nobody had much of any place to go except from one saloon to another, and that it was virtually impossible in the circumstances to avoid meeting everybody in town. However, there is no evidence, written or traditional around Deadwood to show that Wild Bill and his theoretical light of love ever knew each other well enough to say "Hello."

Maudlin and none too coherent as she reached the end of her days, she murmured something about wanting to be buried next to Wild Bill. Her last words, we are informed, were the revelation of a heart-ache that had lasted at least twenty-seven years: "Bill Hickok was the only man I ever loved." In her delirium apparently she had forgotten how she felt about the dime-novel version of Wild Bill's passing:

The great gun fighter knew that he was dying. . . . That drop of moisture on his pale cheek was not the rain but a woman's tears. . . . Calamity Jane was on her knees beside him.

"Don't go away from me, Bill," she sobbed. "I love you. . . . Don't you know that? I love you." And his last message came to her in a whisper she was never going to forget: "My heart has been yours from the first."

Calamity never seemed to care for that piece of literature. Whenever it was mentioned she would go white with rage and scream profanity that could be heard halfway down the block. It is said by some chroniclers that she probably left Deadwood because she could no longer bear to listen to voices that came to her whenever she chanced to pass a dark corner: "My heart has been yours from the first."

She didn't say anything about love or romance when she came back to Deadwood in 1895 except to mention that she had married a cab driver named Burke in El Paso and had left him. She had been numerous places whence echoes filtered back now and again—Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, the Pacific Coast, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico. But she didn't want to talk about her travels, either. Her object in coming back, she frankly admitted, was to get help to educate her little girl. She admitted, somewhat pathetically, that she hadn't any friends anywhere else in the world.

Deadwood rallied round. Someone arranged to put her child in the sisters' school in Sturgis. Someone else found her a place to live. The town began to buzz with reminiscence of the smallpox scourge of '78 and how this woman, then a beautiful girl—and she got more beautiful with each repetition—had nursed the sick and dying fearlessly and without compensation.

After a while, Estelline Bennett tells us, the grateful citizenry got up a benefit for Calamity Jane, a special performance at the Green Front with songs and dances and speeches. For once in their lives respectable women got a chance to see what was inside the ancient brothel's swinging doors.

They were disappointed, for no mining-camp pander ever wasted much money on the decoration of sin. Here was none of the advertised splendor of an Oriental harem—nothing but a bare floor with a pot-bellied iron stove in the middle and a lot of cuspidors and hard chairs tastefully placed about the walls.

More chairs were brought in as the customers collected. Everybody from the mayor down made addresses full of sentiment about Good Old Jane. The treasurer announced the result of his efforts in the vineyard and forthwith handed over to the guest of honor a basket containing several hundred dollars. Jane, weeping only a little, thanked all her friends in Deadwood and then invited everybody to have a drink.

From the Green Front she went on to better things, spreading largess on the way. The evening was a collection of dizzy impressions—roulette wheels, faro tables, poker chips, whisky bottles. Jane woke up the next

morning without a cent. But she was quite cheerful when she dropped into Mike Russell's to get a pick-me-up on credit. It had been a wonderful night, she observed to the bartender, and it was certainly nice to be back with so many fine old friends.

She went touring on a dime-museum circuit in 1896, telling the story of her life and selling booklets purporting to tell what she had contributed toward the winning of the West. Kohl and Middleton declined to renew her contract because of her drinking habits. She managed to get a place on the midway of the Buffalo Exposition and encountered similar difficulties. Buffalo Bill came to get her another job, took a look at her and decided to send her back West, instead. He bought her a ticket to Livingston, Montana, where she stayed for a year, associated off and on with Madame Bulldog, the celebrated dance-hall proprietor. She was beginning to get vague in her conversation and her mind was carrying her back to the frontier of '76.

So one day she reappeared in Deadwood. She toured all the saloons to inform all her old friends that she was sick and about to cash in. Then she went up to a hotel in Terry and died, of pneumonia, twenty-seven years to the day after the death of Wild Bill, on August 2, 1903.

Virtually all the town took part in her funeral. Services were held in the Methodist Church by the Reverend C. B. Clark. Dr. Clark's son, Badger Clark, poet laureate of South Dakota, commented on this as recently discussed in the *Rapid City Daily Journal*:

My father was a saintly man and a great humanitarian. He was an important influence in a new community and virtually gave his whole life for his fellow man. But the only thing people seem to remember about him is that he preached Calamity Jane's funeral sermon.

A mile-long cortege then followed the hearse up the hill to Mount Moriah where Calamity was laid in a grave across the aisle from that of Wild Bill Hickok. Old-timers say that for reasons they can't explain, it was a very touching affair.

Well, just who was Calamity Jane?

Estelline Bennett, who knew her as a roistering old party completely bereft of physical attractions, who used bad language and got roaring drunk, remembers her also as a "woman of considerable personality and charm." Miss Bennett, who is a writer of judgment and objectivity, tells in detail the story of Calamity's benefit party and what became of

the money. Born in Deadwood, the daughter of the first Federal judge in the district, she could not have escaped hearing all that was wrong about Mrs. Martha Jane Burke, but that does not keep her from being kind and appreciative—and gentle—in her recital of how a blatant and popular camp follower risked her professional future, if not her life, doing a nursing job that nobody else in the town would touch.

Brown and Willard dispose of the pocket-picking incident by quoting from the records of her trial before Justice Frank Hall:

The defendant stated that she had found the "fool" drunk under one of the tables and, searching his pockets, had found the money therein . . . to the sum of thirty dollars. . . . Defendant furthermore admitted that she had taken said money for the reason "If I hadn't taken it some of the other girls would have."

Defendant was then asked by Judge Hall: "What did you do with this money?"

Answer: "I sent it up to the hospital to pay the expenses of a girl who is sick there. She's broke and she ain't got any friends."

Justice Hall thereupon dismissed the case warning prosecuting witness not to take money into a dive and expect to keep it.

And there comes another bit of tangible evidence from *My Life on the Frontier*, the autobiography of Miguel Otero, former governor of New Mexico:

No account of the early West would be complete without mention of "Calamity Jane," one of the frontier's most notorious characters. She dressed in a buckskin suit like a man and was regarded by the community as a camp follower, since she preferred to follow her well known profession among the soldiers rather than among the teamsters, freighters, herders and hunters.

Calamity Jane's accomplishments as a wild woman were numerous; she could drink whiskey, smoke, chew tobacco and swear better than the proverbial drunken sailor.

When I used to see her about Hays City in 1868, she was a comparatively young woman, perhaps twenty years of age or thereabouts and extremely good looking. She was a fearless and excellent horsewoman, and a good shot with either rifle or pistol. Money seemed to mean little to her; she spent it recklessly in saloons or at the gambling table.

After a few years she left Hays City and moved from terminal town to terminal town on the advancing Kansas & Pacific railroad till she eventually reached Kit Carson, Col.; then she successively drifted to

Dodge City, Granada and La Junta, towns along the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad. She departed from La Junta for parts farther north. All the time she kept up her connection with the dance halls and continued in her old occupation. As she grew older she developed into a rather bright woman.

There was one redeeming feature to those unfortunate women of the frontier: that was their charity. They were entirely unlike their male associates, the bad men of the frontier, who were constantly looking for a quarrel. These women in almost every instance took the part of the weak and would spend their last dollar to aid anyone in distress. Calamity Jane was no exception to the rule. . . .

Whoever or whatever she was, Jane lies today more peaceful than Wild Bill or Preacher Smith, whose monuments are forever being despoiled by people who collect pieces of tombstones. When Jane died the old hullabaloo of the mining-camp days was just about finished. Automobiles and electric lights and phonographs and high schools had come to Deadwood. One cannot doubt that there had come a reappraisal of the cemetery sculpture of the early eighties. Furthermore the pioneers were all getting older and money was tight.

Jane got as ambitious a funeral as the community could provide. But the marker over her grave shows no sign of lavish expenditure. Looking around Deadwood—at Mount Moriah, the parks, the gardens, the corners of some of the public buildings—you get the feeling that some local cement worker along about the turn of the century bought a mold for a sort of combination urn and flower vase on a square pedestal, the whole business about three feet high. He must have turned out hundreds of them and for a time they seem to have been much in demand as headstones. One of them stands in the shadow of Hickok's crumbling statue to indicate the resting place of Jane.

The plot is covered with trees and shrubbery and is as well tended as most cemeteries. In summertime it is beautiful and filled with peace. But sometimes the sun strikes through the foliage and gives striking high light and shadow to the bas-relief on the pedestal at the head of the grave—a grinning, sardonic mask of comedy above the marble tablet and the inscription: MARTHA JANE BURKE.

You wonder if it's appropriate.

## CHAPTER 22

### FLY SPECKED BILLY

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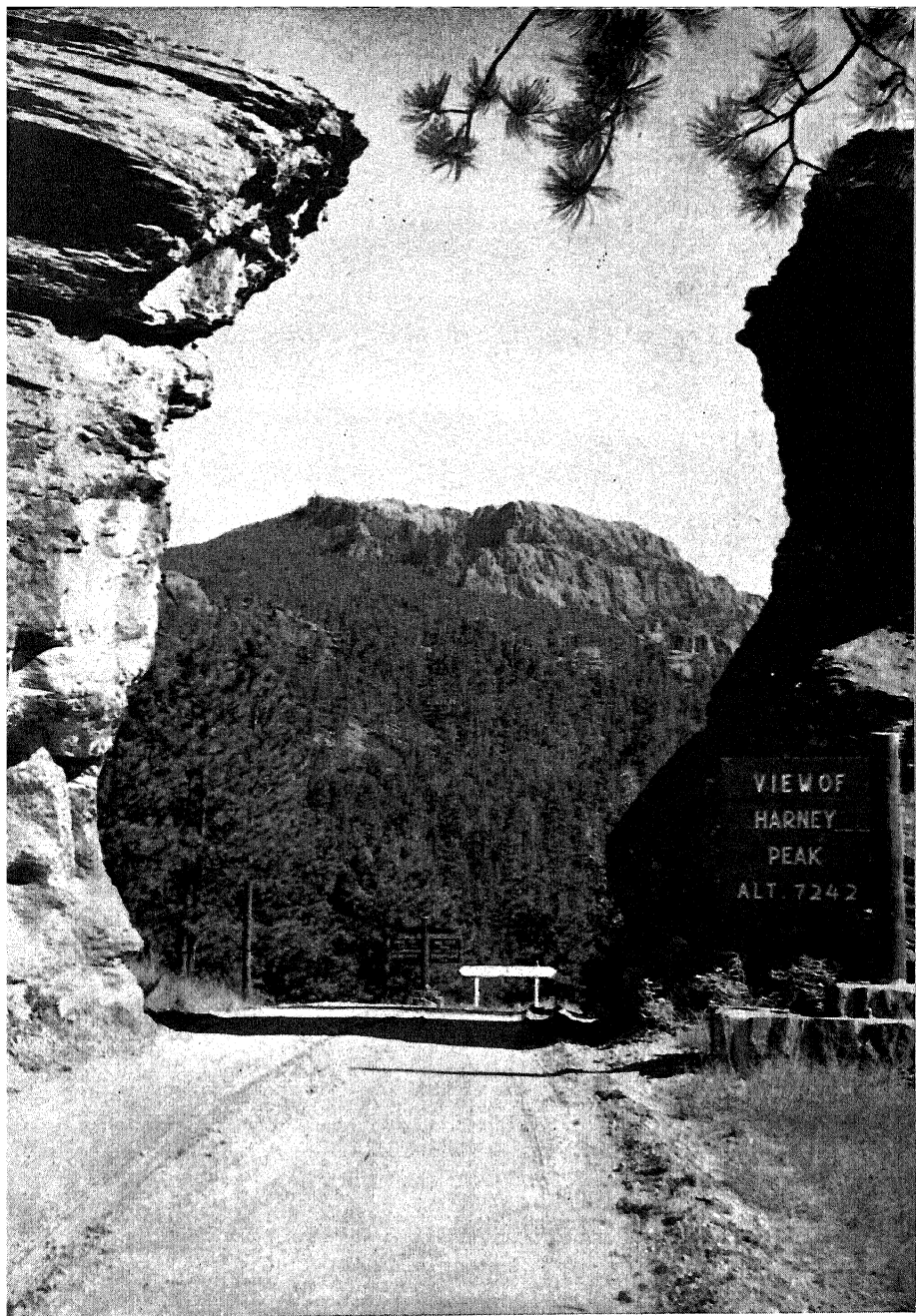
CUSTER—*H. S. Way, who came to the Black Hills from London in 1886, became interested in geology and it is to him that much of the credit for the development of Custer's rare minerals is due. . . . He has been a foremost mover in the preservation of heroic sites.*

—Dispatch to *Rapid City Journal*  
July 6, 1936

News of the big strike in Deadwood Gulch apparently caused no disturbance in the economy of Custer City until April 1876. There was no regular communication of any sort with the northern Hills. The stage line from Cheyenne stopped at French Creek, as did most of the prospecting parties. Save for Rapid City over on the east slope there was no organized settlement in the Black Hills. News from the mysterious sector beyond Castle Creek was to be had only when some sourdough rode in for supplies. And though some of these messengers managed to break through the deeply drifted snow that spring with glowing tales of quick riches, it took a long time for them to convince anybody.

They weren't entirely popular, these men from the northern Hills. A large percentage of the people flocking into Custer from Cheyenne had come in with the first wave and had been marched back a couple of hundred miles to the Union Pacific right of way. And this contingent felt that those who remained in the hills dodging cavalry and Indians had somehow taken an unfair advantage. In the circumstances it was natural enough that the lads who came out of the hideaways in the spring to buy beans or mittens or black powder and exchange a little gossip were given scant courtesy.

It is easy to reconstruct the scene as Montana Mike or Bedrock Bill staggered half frozen into the warmth of Peewee Pribble's Trading Post.



On the Hill City-Rapid Road.





Deadwood from the White Rocks.

The visitors pay for their needs in dust without arousing comment because dust is the usual medium of exchange along French Creek.

"Quite a strike up in Deadwood Gulch," says one, just to make conversation. "Runs five, maybe ten dollars to the pan."

"That so?" answers the storekeeper politely. "That's certainly pretty good—ten dollars to the pan!" But he doesn't believe it. If there was a strike up in Deadwood Gulch, wherever that is, they wouldn't be talking about it. They'd be filling you full of tales of hard luck and Indians. . . .

The glad news went begging around Custer for several weeks merely because the bearers of it insisted on telling the truth.

However, when the tale had been repeated often enough, some of the more gullible citizens began to listen. Then, presently, one of this group called around to see Joe Metz who had come into town some months earlier with odds and ends of equipment and a barrel of flour and had established himself as a baker.

"What'll you take for your business here?" the visitor wanted to know. "I mean everything . . . all your pans, all your flour—everything."

Metz did some quick figuring. Flour was worth twenty-six dollars a hundred weight and he had nearly a ton of it—five hundred and twenty dollars' worth on the market. That much flour, however, meant about twenty-eight hundred one-pound loaves that could be sold for as much as a dollar a loaf if one had a virtual monopoly—and he had a virtual monopoly.

On the other hand Metz wasn't an adventurer. He had lived a quiet life back in the farming country around Mankato. His customers were mostly law-abiding men like himself. They didn't get drunk and murder one another. And he had heard enough about Indians and Indian fighting to know something about what it meant. He went about in constant fear for the day when the flaming arrows would begin to drop in unprotected Custer.

"This business is worth about five thousand dollars," he said judiciously. "There's plenty of money and plenty of customers. But me, I'm tired of it. I'll sell out to you for two thousand."

The customer made no argument. "Sold," he said, and he weighed out the dust at twenty dollars an ounce. Metz wrote and signed a simple notice of transfer and the new bakery owner became expansive.

"There's been a big strike in the northern Hills," he said. "The stampede will be on any time now and I figure I can make a pile turn-

ing out hardtack for the prospectors. . . . It ain't too late for you to get in if you want to buy back a half interest."

Metz shook his head. "I've had enough," he said.

Metz didn't wait for a returning bull train or a possible stagecoach.

"I'm going to light out for Sidney," he announced. "The Sidney trail is only about a hundred and sixty-nine miles and the one to Cheyenne is around two hundred." Then he loaded a camping outfit, his wife and a colored maid into a covered wagon, climbed onto the front seat next to a driver hired for the trip and started south. On the way out of town he met Scott Davis just coming in from Cheyenne with a mule train.

"See any Indians?" he inquired.

Davis said that he hadn't seen any north of the Cheyenne River. But he was pessimistic about what they might be doing to the south.

"You'd better not try to go to Sidney or anywhere else, alone. If I were you I'd head for Fort Laramie and wait at Cheyenne Ranch until somebody comes along headed the same way."

Metz accepted the advice, changed his plans and started out over the traveled route to Laramie. The party reached the head of Red Canyon approximately twelve miles south of Custer at about noon on April 24, 1876. From that point on their history is still a matter of debate. Robert Flormann, leading a party through the canyon en route to Custer City, the next morning came upon a covered wagon and what seemed to be a deserted campsite.

When he rode up warily to reconnoiter he found Metz's body near the front of the wagon. He had been shot twice in the body and once in the head. The driver, also shot through the head, was lying about a mile back on the trail to Custer. His position indicated that he had been shot while running away. A short distance farther along Flormann found Mrs. Metz. There was no trace of the horses or of the colored woman.

Mrs. Flormann prepared the body of Mrs. Metz for burial, washing her face, arranging her hair and tidying her clothing. The three bodies were taken to the Cheyenne Stage Station (near where Edgemont is today) and quickly laid away. The Flormann party, which was well armed, proceeded cautiously to French Creek.

Flormann reported that the contents of the wagon had been strewed about the campsite. Trunks had been broken open and apparently rifled. As he reconstructed the scene, the party had halted for dinner

when the killers crept up on them. The driver had been gathering firewood when he heard the shot that killed Metz. Mrs. Metz who was found halfway down a slope to the creek seemed to have been looking for drinking water.

"And I don't think the Indians did it," Flormann reported. "Metz's gold dust was gone and the Indians haven't any use for gold dust."

A week later Captain C. V. Gardner came into the canyon with a party of a sort not often mentioned in the glamour stories of the seventies. It would seem that Metz the baker was not the only one who had tired of adventure and dangerous living and the promise of riches at the end of the rainbow. Had anyone taken inventory it would have been fairly obvious toward the middle of 1876 that there were about three claimants in the Hills for every paying claim—all of which led to much murder but little profit. Gardner was leading a large caravan of these discouraged fortune hunters back to civilization or at least to what passed for civilization in Cheyenne.

The party stopped for luncheon—dinner to them—near the spot where the Metz family had halted for the last time. And when the march was resumed Captain Gardner started on a course along the creek bottom, parallel to the line of march.

About a mile from the scene of the murder he came upon a small draw, and there, in an upright position leaning forward with her hands behind her neck and her face against the top of the bank, he found the body of the colored woman. There was an arrow between her shoulders.

Gardner sent a messenger back to Custer with the news while he and the caravan plodded on toward Cheyenne. Presently a burial party rode out from town to give the unfortunate woman a fitting funeral. They found her without trouble and then occurred one of those touching incidents with which the history of Custer is so well filled. As they were about to lower the body into the freshly dug grave one sharp-eyed pallbearer noticed that she was clutching in her hand a five-dollar bill.

With deep sympathy and respect the burial party carried the five dollars back to McHugh's Saloon in Custer, debating the meanwhile what should be done with it. The dead woman, so far as anybody in the Black Hills knew, had no heirs. In the circumstances it would have been the proper procedure to turn the money over to some worthy charity and it looked as if everybody in Custer might be classed as a worthy charity.

No solution to this very delicate problem had come by the time they

entered McHugh's. But then some unnamed mathematician in the party made an important discovery. On the wall hung a sign mentioning that Old Skull Bender Whisky was being sold for twenty-five cents the glass—cash. There was a quick caucus and counting of heads; the tally came to an even twenty. The mathematician smiled triumphantly.

"I know that our departed sister extends toward us, wherever she is, the same kindly regard that we entertain toward her. She, of course, has no further use for this five-spot—not that it would have bought her much up here anyway. And I find, in considering the problem that she has bequeathed us, a solution that you might call providential. There are just twenty of us and twenty-five cents goes into five dollars just twenty times . . . Belly up to the bar, gentlemen."

So, with great solemnity and deep sincerity they drank the slain woman's health.

This pioneer ability to adjust one's needs to fit the circumstances, or vice versa (plus the fact that there was still plenty of gold in the gravel of French Creek) enabled the town to survive the exodus of the Deadwood boom. The northern Hills might offer a more abundant life but Custer was still in a strategic position on the supply trails. Palmyra, the great city of the Syrian caravan routes, had had no more to offer.

There hadn't been much permanent construction in the neighborhood when the rush started. In point of fact Custer had been the world's first trailer camp with the bulk of the pioneers living in, or under, the wagons in which they had journeyed to the Hills. When the hegira to Deadwood got well under way the town looked like a spot from which a carnival had moved out. It consisted of a few log buildings facing one another aloofly across the wide main street—the street in which it was possible to turn six yoked ox teams around. And it remained virtually unchanged until railroad prospects brought a little boom about ten years later.

It never had the advertised glamour of Deadwood. It panned its gold without any hullabaloo, cut its own wood, peddled its own fish and buried its own dead. But no one, knowing its origins, will be ingenuous enough to think that there was anything humdrum about the life of its inhabitants. The badmen who gave Deadwood its reputation generally passed through Custer first—until the opening of the stage line out of Sidney via Rapid City, they had to. If they failed to break

into the press dispatches at this end of the Hills, it was largely due to the fact that a considerable number of Custer's pioneers were just as hard as they were.

You notice in reading the thumbnail biographical sketches of numerous horse thieves, claim jumpers and stage robbers of the period that they generally behaved themselves around French Creek. The community, of course, operated, as so many did in the days before the telegraph, on the theory that what you don't know won't hurt you. . . . "Stranger, maybe you shot Big Foot Benny in the back up in Deadwood, like they say. But we don't know and we ain't asking, and we ain't doing anything about it until you shoot somebody in the back down here. . . ."

For all that the wages of sin were collected in Custer with monotonous regularity: "Killed unidentified man in Rochford; shot by posse in Custer." "Unnamed member Axlebee gang of horse thieves—hanged by citizens of Custer." "Dick Burnett, executed by Custer vigilantes. . . ."

It would appear that few of these desperadoes had a chance to live long enough to impress the community with their novel graces and gifts. So while Deadwood was thriving in the reflected glory of Wild Bill and Calamity Jane and an all-star cast of gunmen, Custer had to be content with a part interest in a picturesque shrew known as the Sage Hen and a sort of short-term lease on Fly Specked Billy.

The Sage Hen has been discussed elsewhere inasmuch as she is sometimes considered a daughter of Buffalo Gap. But despite F. S. Billy's activities elsewhere in the Hills, including a murderous holdup near Calico Canyon, his final performance entitles him to be considered an almost purely local product.

Fly Specked Billy's real name was James Lawton. That he was generously freckled accounts for part of his name. The substitution of Bill for James, however, is no more explainable in his case than that of James Butler Hickok. He seems to have been definitely a person of low mentality. In Chicago in the days of prohibition he would probably have been a minor hoodlum and an early corpse. His importance in Black Hills legend is not due so much to any of his nefarious deeds—until the end he was more of a nuisance than a menace—but rather to the fanfare with which the *Custer County Chronicle* greeted his passing. The unnamed chronicler had one of those inspired moments that come all too infrequently to reporters. He was alert, observing and fully attuned to the spirit of the occasion. As a result, his account of F. S.

Billy's last moments is a masterpiece of frontier journalism. We present it herewith. You'll never find a better one—at least not by the same author. . . .

CUSTER COUNTY CHRONICLE—EXTRA!!

FULL ACCOUNT OF THE TRAGEDY

Custer City, D. T., Jan. 9, 1881

DEATH'S ROUND-UP  
By Revolver and Rope

A Murderer and Judge Lynch  
Become Acquainted

"Fly Specked Billy" Trans-  
formed Into a Pine Cone  
With the Blood of Abe  
Barnes Still On  
His Hands

Twenty Masked Men Send Him  
Over the Road

Custer City, Dakota Territory, Wednesday, January 9, 1881—Last Sunday night was the occasion of the most thrilling and exciting scene that Custer has seen since the resurrection. A cold-blooded and unprovoked murder was consummated and followed almost immediately by the lynching of the murderer.

Abe Barnes, a freighter residing in Kearney Junction, Neb., and engaged in the business of handling freight, was coming toward Custer. When about twenty miles below here, he was joined in the road by a man known to Barnes and to several of our old residents as Fly Specked Billy, a desperate character, an outlaw formerly connected with Lame Johnny of infamous notoriety.

Billy informed the train that he had just left a freight outfit headed from Deadwood to Sidney and that he wanted to visit Custer. Because of fear or for old acquaintance's sake, Barnes let him ride.

At Custer, Fly Specked Billy's first concern was to find out who the peace officers were. After that he borrowed Barnes' revolver, saying that he might have to defend himself against some of his enemies in

the camp. When he had procured the revolver he went out and got drunk.

About 10 P.M. he came into George Palmer's saloon and offered to buy a drink for a man at the bar. As the man picked up his drink, Billy laid the revolver across his shoulder and fired three shots into the building across the street.

Palmer said something. So Billy turned on him. He held the pistol pointed at Palmer's head and amused himself by cocking it and letting the hammer down slowly with his thumb.

While this was going on he noticed William Summers trying to get out of the room. So he swung around, put the pistol at Summers' breast and pulled the trigger. For some reason the hammer snapped harmlessly.

Billy then walked over to where Barnes was playing billiards. He caught Barnes by the collar, at the same time holding the pistol to his right breast. The words "Come on and take a drink" and a pistol shot were simultaneous.

Barnes cried out, "Oh, I'm shot." He ran a few steps and fell, expiring in a few minutes.

Fly Specked Billy made a run for the door. A Mr. Eby grappled with him. Red Moore struck a furious blow at the wretch's head with a Colt's pistol. The first blow fell on Mr. Eby's hand nearly crushing it and smashing two fingers.

The second blow was delivered with better effect just as the door was reached and Billy fell into the arms of John T. Code, the sheriff, who was just rushing in, having heard the shot.

Sheriff Code took the prisoner to John McHugh's place where he was bound hand and foot. Almost immediately a crowd began to collect. But the sheriff warned them there would be bloodshed if they attempted to come into McHugh's. So they dispersed.

Code feared an attempt to lynch the man. The lights were put out and he waited an hour after that before he attempted to remove the prisoner to his own cabin, the jail being in no condition to put a prisoner in.

He then started out the back door, having with him as deputies, Frank Peters, William Quinn, and Pat McHugh. Their prisoner was tightly bound, therefore they had to carry him.

Arriving at the door of Code's cabin they were entering with as much haste as possible when the avengers sprang from all sides of the building and from every place of concealment. And before Code could say a word, half a dozen disguised men were sitting on him and as many more on his assistants, while the prisoner was spinning toward the nearest tree as rapidly as twenty men could haul him.



Code and his men were thrust into the cabin and what occurred then can be gleaned only by other discoveries. A short time later the sheriff escaped and ran up and down Main street swearing in a posse. He got three or four men including the coroner. [In the circumstances the coroner seems to have been a logical choice.]

The posse followed the tracks of the mob across French creek, and there they found Fly Specked Billy hanging from a pine.

Judge Lynch had executed his inexorable sentence cleverly and secretly, and Fly Specked Billy, with his hands warm with the blood of his inoffending victim, had paid the penalty. And his soul, if such as he have souls, had fled to the tortures of an eternity of punishment.

The body was cut down and brought into town. No noise was heard and but few were awakened while any portion of the double tragedy was being enacted. Great was the surprise of the citizens on awakening Monday morning.

A coroner's jury held an inquest on each body eliciting evidence in accordance with the above report.

The verdict: "Barnes was mortally wounded by a leaden bullet discharged from a pistol in the hands of James Fowler, alias Fly Specked Billy.

"Fowler came to death at hands of person or persons unknown."

The jury was composed of the well known citizens, Oto Reeder, Thomas I. Wheeler and Alfred T. Fair.

The body of the murderer will be buried today.

Mr. Barnes will be kept waiting for the arrival of a brother from Kearney, Neb., who is now on his way in.

Mr. Gallagher, the man shot last Thursday, died this forenoon. Two deputies are now looking for the man who shot him in self defense.



The late General Custer.



Father Jean Pierre De Smet, S.J.



"Poet Scout" Crawford.



Actor Jack Langrishe.



Gem Theater, Deadwood, in the eighties.



Chinese Hose Team, Deadwood.

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## INFORMATION PIECE V

### *Custer*

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Custer today is probably less interested in gold than in ranching, although anyone in town would still rather talk about mining than eat. There are more horses around here than anywhere else in the southern Hills, and the continuous presence of cowpunchers and Indians ambling through the streets is one reason why the town's frontier atmosphere remains unchanged.

There are still a lot of fresh prospect holes in the neighborhood. A dredging outfit, whose traces are still to be seen on the west edge of town, recently took out what was left of French Creek's gold. But there are plenty of ancient sourdoughs confident, as they have been for fifty or sixty years, that they will uncover a bonanza any day now. They will admit, somewhat reluctantly, that the real money in mining nowadays derives from such definitely unprecious minerals as feldspar, mica, lithium minerals, jet, rose quartz and beryl. The local feldspar mill is one of the most important in the region, and the Custer rose quartz deposits haven't so far been equaled in the Hills.

Custer is now, and has been for many years, an active lumber-producing center. The conservation policies of the U. S. Forest Service plus a replanting program that has been in effect for more than thirty years, now gives the local mills an assured supply of timber, which in recent years has been the principal factor in the town's growth. There is a saying in the Hills that ironically accents the risks of the lumber business: "You can always tell a stranger in Custer—he's a man who has all his fingers."

In recent years Custer has become an important stopping place for tourists traveling to or from Yellowstone. It is also a

station on the most popular route between Deadwood and Cheyenne. So the environs of what in all respects is still a typical pioneer Black Hills town—and about the only one of its kind still alive—are now liberally sprinkled with cabin camps. There are at least three good restaurants, bearing out an old superstition of the district that “they feed you better in the small towns.” There are two hotels in Main Street and an efficient billeting office run by the Women’s Civic Committee in the Way Museum.

It has always been the custom of a large number of tourists to dash through Custer on their way to somewhere else. But there are plenty of things to be seen in the district besides the Fly Specked Billy Trading Post or the Old Coin Saloon.

North of town four miles on 85A is Crazy Horse Ranch where Korczak Ziolkowski is working on a mountain-carving project on a scale like that of Mount Rushmore. Ziolkowski, who is an exceptionally talented sculptor with a widespread reputation has brought more excitement to the southern Hills than anything that has happened since the Wounded Knee massacre. He proposes to carve a three-dimensional equestrian figure of Crazy Horse on top of a prominent granite uplift. And to further that undertaking he has bought and paid for a couple of thousand acres of land and a suitable mountain—to have and to hold. Visitors are admitted to the ranch.

Forking left from 85A at the ranch entrance is the Deerfield Road (graveled). You follow it in a westerly direction for a mile and come to a junction. The left fork wanders westward to Gillette Canyon and Ice Cave and the top of the world. The right branch of the Y is the Deerfield Road, and it proceeds up and down mountains and through canyons on a highly improbable course until it breaks out of a lot of peaks and pine to cross Spring Creek. From this point, theoretically, you ought to be able to get almost anywhere in the Hills by canoe—for Spring Creek is the hardest-working stream in South Dakota and the most ubiquitous. The road proceeds to stagger around

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the base of Medicine Mountain, then turns off the route to Deerfield and plunges into a new canyon strewn with flowers, and sunny and silent. In a few more miles you find yourself entering Hill City which you could have reached on a better road in half the time. But there are compensations. You have just been traveling through some of the region's most pleasant scenery—and in virtual privacy.

The trail to Gillette Canyon, commonly known as the Limestone Road, zigzags for about five miles and then starts a climb to a plateau 6,000 feet up. This limestone uplift seems to lie along the top of the west slope of the Hills from one end to the other. Deer hunters have known it for years, and lumberjacks and occasional sheepherders. But so far as the average citizen of western South Dakota is concerned the entire area between Highway 16 and U. S. 85 and west of the Burlington tracks is just the land that nobody ever saw. To all intents and purposes it is still the real Paha-Sapa, the silent, unapproachable home of the Manitou.

Some of the most breathless spectacles of the Black Hills are in here where only an occasional wood chopper pauses to look at them. The roads are better than any highway that could have been found in this area right after the First World War. But motor tourists have become more fastidious and less inquisitive, so very few locals and almost no strangers show any interest in what lies over the ridge a mile from the concrete pavement.

Where the road begins its climb, a side road leads off to the right toward Sourdough Gulch and Bear Mountain. Bear Mountain with an altitude of 7,172 feet, is the second highest peak between what an Easterner calls the Rocky Mountains, and the Atlantic Ocean. Its existence is a secret to everybody except a few huntsmen and the forest ranger who sits on top of it.

Ten miles from Crazy Horse is Bull Springs Camp, a seasonal resort for the deerslayers. Two miles farther on the road

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climbs up over Signal Hill, 6,500 feet. Abruptly it leaves a panorama of limestone cliffs, pine-girdled peaks and precipitous descents, and meanders for a while across a lush meadow, then drops quickly into Gillette Canyon. Two miles beyond, past Rodgers' Well, a 300-foot hole, now dry, past the crumbling corrals of the old Rodgers Ranch, through a grassy park surrounded by low white cliffs, the ruts of an old wagon road veer off to the right to Ice Cave.

The cave one day may possibly rate as one of the most remarkable excavations in an area where about a dozen such things are already located on the road maps. The entrance is a natural arch 75 feet wide at the base and about 20 feet high. The current of air that comes out of it is cold enough, even in summer, to give the place its name. It has been explored and charted by forest rangers carrying electric torches and magnesium strips. And they have delivered enraptured reports about what they saw in it. But so far no attempt has been made to open it to the public. At this writing it deserves a visit only because of the gorgeous panoramas one must traverse in getting to it.

One of the more amazing bits of hidden scenery in this end of Shangri-La is Hell's Canyon—so called because the pioneers found it difficult to cross. There is certainly no dearth of canyons in the Black Hills. But this one is like nothing to be found so far among the nickel post cards. Its most spectacular section is a short distance from the Mud Springs Road which branches northward from U. S. 16 near Jewel Cave—a cleft in the limestone about 150 yards wide at the top and possibly 600 feet deep.

There are other ravines as wide and as deep every few miles between the Mud Springs Road and the Wyoming state line. The individuality of this one is due to the strange architecture of its walls. From the rims they start down almost perpendicularly but only for about fifty feet. Each ends on a grassy shelf about ten feet wide and remarkably free from detritus. At the

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edge of the shelf on either side of the canyon another wall drops down another fifty feet, and so the descent continues in a series of symmetrical steps.

Heumphreus' Twelve Mile Ranch no longer gets many visits from the tourists. But that has nothing to do with unmarked, unfamiliar trails and dizzy ascents. Its period of lonesomeness began when the engineers decided on the present route for Highway 16 and took it away from the old stage trail from Custer to Cheyenne. It was called "Twelve Mile" because it was twelve miles from Custer, a good deal of a journey for six horses hauling a heavy coach. It was not only a relay station but a dinner stop and was talked about by the travelers just as good dining rooms are now.

There seems to have been reason enough. The comfortable old ranch house sprawled at the bottom of the hill amidst its trim corrals and outbuildings gives evidence of long tenancy by folks who understood the art of gracious living even at a dangerous outpost in the Indian country. One of the most interesting features of the old house is a library unsurpassed in South Dakota for its texts on the botany and geology of the region. Another room is given over to a large collection of mineral specimens and a remarkable display of paintings and wood carvings of the early West.

Jewel Cave, a national monument, presents a variety of crystalline formations, in striking contrast to the intricate filigree boxes of Wind Cave National Park. It was discovered by a pair of prospectors, Albert and Frank Michaud, who sold it in 1928 to the Newcastle, Wyoming, Lions Club and the Custer Chamber of Commerce who explored and developed it. In 1934 the U. S. Government took it over as a national monument. It has not yet been completely explored. Two passages are now open to the public, one a mile long, the other two miles.

Not so long ago I read a notice in the *Custer County Chron-*

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*icle* with a definite feeling of bewilderment. It said—and this is verbatim—“There will be a meeting of rabbits and gold gnomes in the council chamber at the City Hall Saturday morning at 10:30. Please be on time because this is to be an important meeting.”

The translation was simple to the natives, although without their assistance a lot of visitors might have gone through life thinking odd things about the local council. It was part of the pageant rehearsal, they said. All the kids who had been cast in the important parts of rabbits and gold gnomes were to be rounded up and latched into their costumes for a final check. It would be a big day for Custer when they turned out. Just about everybody in the county would be in town Saturday morning, my informant said. The kids were all too little to come by themselves, so some members of their families would have to tag along. He thought there would be much commotion. And there was.

Of a hundred or more children who arrived at the City Hall that morning the oldest wasn't any older than four. It was obvious that being gold gnomes or rabbits and dressing up in strange-looking clothes was entirely new to them, and their noisy convention seemed to offer all the elements of bedlam. But it was obvious that the amazingly calm director of the proceedings had plenty of assistants. Every mother in the hall knew without asking any questions what her child was supposed to do and where he was supposed to stand. And my informant was able to explain that, too.

“None of this is anything new to these women,” he said. “They were all gold gnomes or flower sprites or rays of sunshine or rabbits themselves. This is really a civic affair and everybody in town has a part in it. Next year these kids will get promoted. They'll be flowers if they're girls—rosebuds, yellow peas, anemones, bluebells, tiger lilies and shooting stars. If they're boys they'll be large animals. When they get older they act as early settlers. And finally the girls get to do the solo

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dances or act as leads in some of the ensemble numbers. The boys keep at it until they land in General Custer's cavalry. Higher than that, there isn't anything."

The pageant, of course, is based on Custer City's melodramatic history. But the prologue deals with time that was long gone when the Gordon party came to build the stockade on French Creek. In this episode the Great Manitou creates Paha-Sapa, the Black Hills, to be a dwelling place of beauty and peace for Man. He sends out the Messenger to control the sun and winds and with their aid bring forth trees, flowers and living creatures to delight and comfort His children. He sends forth the gold gnomes to insure that Man will enjoy the treasures of the earth.

All of this is enacted in a natural amphitheater on a hillside south of town and with literally hundreds of actors taking part the color effects are kaleidoscopic. Red, blue, green and gold horses move across the stage with startling effect.

The next part is a succession of historical scenes, starting with the arrival of the Gordon party and the building of the stockade and reaching its climax with frontier scenes—"The Arrival of the Cowboys," "The Hanging of Fly Specked Billy," "A Square Dance" and "An Indian Attack on Custer."

The last part presents "The Builders of a Community." An unseen actor reads the prologue:

Little town of Custer, slowly have you grown and still you are very small, but within your borders there has been built up a spirit of great loyalty and fellowship. Custer, lying in your beautiful valley, surrounded by your friendly Hills, you give to the weary strength and health; to the strong you give joy and invigorating power; to the sad and troubled you give healing sympathy. To you, Custer, first-born of the Black Hills towns, and to our state and nation we pledge our loyalty and present our gifts.

The pageant ends with something more than a thousand

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people coming back into the amphitheater in their bright trappings as birds and flowers and spirits of a dawning world, or in the sober garb of the pioneer, or in the war bonnets of the Sioux or in the blue of the old Seventh Cavalry. The amazing tinted horses come forward with the color guard, as a living flag unfolds in the center of the great stage.

The pageant of Gold Discovery Days for many years has been the most fascinating show of its type in the Hills. You won't look at it long without knowing that it wasn't staged by Cecil B. DeMille with ballet numbers by Fokine. But it doesn't take you much longer to realize that you don't miss Hollywood at all. This thing is put on with the spirit that the commentator talks about in the last scene. What it lacks in professional timing is compensated for by the pride, sincerity and verve of the actors—from the gold gnomes to survivors of the Little Big Horn battle appearing in person. It has humor without burlesque, pathos without tears, and it is displayed with a great feeling for color and a great natural exuberance.

It is as far from standardized entertainment as homemade pie from a factory tart. But it doesn't pretend to be anything that it isn't. It is Custer's own—and it's beautiful.

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## CHAPTER 23

### DEADWOOD RICHARD

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DEADWOOD—*We understand that the jailer offers \$15 reward for information as to where the bullet went that was fired at the Finn. Parties on McGovern Hill heard one cavorting around there and went under cover. Reports have not come in but Frank Hamilton's dog is dead.—Lead Daily Call, September 8, 1888.*

There is something pathetic about Deadwood Dick. He never rode a trail until about the time town councils were clamoring for taillights on horses. He never saw a stagecoach held up except in a Class B movie. He never fought an Indian until—well, he never fought an Indian.

You've got to say this about Deadwood: it is a town with an abiding faith in its own folklore—even such folklore as it makes up for itself. Else why the memorial cairn up near where the Indians killed Preacher Smith (an actual character) to perpetuate a myth?

Deadwood Dick was born in New York back in the eighties between the paper covers of one of Beadle's dime novels. For several years he was a conversational entity. But he had no place in the census until a press agent named Bert Bell spanked life into him along about 1927.

The frontier was largely gone by then. Out on Pine Ridge an Indian named Flying Feather had just killed somebody—but with a Model T Ford. All the saloons were so-called coffee shops as a result of so-called prohibition. In the new Federal courthouse a U. S. deputy marshal was listening to reports of a battle—between a couple of minor lightweights—over the radio. There wasn't a horse to be seen in Main Street—not a Studebaker buggy nor a Schuettler wagon nor a Red River cart nor an ox train nor a bullwhacker nor a black-bearded miner, nor a dance-hall canary, nor a two-gun man, nor a hay and feed store. But Deadwood Dick got along all right.

Refurbished by Mr. Bell and the Chamber of Commerce in a fine

new suit from a theatrical supply house, he got into an airplane and went to Washington and shook hands with a President. The President's name was Coolidge and the sight of Dick's convincing regalia may have been responsible for some of his odd ideas about the West.

Deadwood Dick's uniform, although it was well received by admirers at travel fairs in Chicago and old settlers' picnics and wreath layings and grand openings closer to home, wasn't of local manufacture. As preserved to us in all sorts of souvenir postal-card pictures it looks as if it might have been designed by Jim Bridger and assembled by the property man of *Rose Marie*. It had no resemblance to anything that a brave man might wear to a dance at the Green Front but, on the other hand, it was a fair copy of the clothes that the cover artist for Beadle had hung on Deadwood Dick during all the long period of his literary popularity.

On official occasions the old scout wore a couple of long-barreled revolvers and sometimes a rifle. He was a benevolent and scholarly looking old gent, and like so many of the Wild West's heroes he gave no indication whatever of special gifts for bloodshed and violence. But in general he looked like what people expected Deadwood Dick to look like, and presently he was in such demand that he had to give full time to being himself or a reasonable facsimile thereof.

So far as his history goes, his name was really Dick. His last name, in this incarnation, was Clarke—which you aren't likely to find in any of Wheeler's novels. It made no difference, one way or another, in his rise to belated national fame in the rotogravure.

D. M. McGaghey, Deadwood's archivist, still feels a little bitter about the whole business, despite the fact that Richard Clarke was laid away several years ago.

"Deadwood Dick will never die so long as there are press agents to keep him resurrected," he said when we were going through the Adams Museum records trying to get a few facts about Mr. Clarke's background and origins. "There have been four Deadwood Dicks in this neighborhood and if you can have four there's no reason why you shouldn't have five—although I will say that the material they make ghosts out of is getting pretty thin.

"There wasn't anything wrong about Richard Clarke except that he was never able to get back to normal after he saw himself in a buckskin suit with fringe on the top. Of course there never was any Deadwood Dick either, outside of Wheeler's novels, but we'd talked about him so long that he seemed at least as real as Wild Bill and Sam Bass and Wyatt Earp and other lads who used to hang around here. When

we started this annual parade of The Days of '76 we naturally had to have Deadwood Dick as one of the characters in it. And the committee picked Dick Clarke probably because he was the right age.

"He got into costume and marched in the parade and when it was over he went back to work for another year and that was all there was to it. Even when he was wearing his long-haired wig we all knew he was Dick Clarke and we never thought he was anything else. He'd been working for some years on the section down at Whitewood and about the time the committee put him into The Days of '76 he was day man in a stable up in Lead.

"Well, along came 1927 and President Coolidge was invited to come out here. So Bert Bell got the notion that the best publicity in the world would be to have Deadwood Dick go to the White House and second the motion."

It turned out to be good publicity all right. When Bell started his promotion he probably had no idea of deceiving anybody. He might have sent Wild Bill or Preacher Smith to do the job except that their names weren't as definitely linked with Deadwood and the Black Hills. It was all to be a little bit of good picture material—pageantry, like George Washington in knee pants and ruffles welcoming a convention of the D. A. R. . . . Nobody ever went home with the idea that the actor on the stage was really George Washington.

But if that had been Bill's notion, it would seem that he gave entirely too much credit to the information, memory and logic of the mass mind. Trying to keep out of a succession of speak-easies in Washington he found that in all the world he was probably the only person who knew that Richard Clarke wasn't really Deadwood Dick. Originally he had put the total at two, counting Clarke, but as his protégé began to throw himself into his work Bill knew that he stood alone.

"Richard Clarke had never had an experience like that," observed Mr. McGaghey. "When he came back here he was Deadwood Dick in person and in the flesh and no mistake about it."

After his first shock Bert Bell made the most of a situation that had got beyond his control. If people wanted to believe in Deadwood Dick, all right, let them believe. It seemed just as harmless as believing in Santa Claus and less expensive. Deadwood Dick Clarke started on an extensive social routine that took him all over the Middle West. I saw him once at a travel show given by the *Chicago Daily News* and, to make conversation, asked him how long he'd been Deadwood Dick and the old boy was genuinely insulted.

"You'll find my history in the pamphlet," he said indignantly and turned away from me.

The pamphlet said that he had been born in Cheyenne in 1855 and had spent a childhood perfecting himself in riding, roping, shooting, boxing, wrestling, scouting and Indian dialects. He had proceeded to Deadwood in '76 and with the aid of some fabulous luck in prospecting and an appointment as deputy U. S. marshal had become a sort of Lone Ranger with his finger in a thousand pies and his nose in everybody's business. (We paraphrase.) The pamphlet made no mention of the Beadle dime novels although the biography sounded as if Wheeler might have written it.

There were some people in Deadwood Dick's orbit who, despite the example of a large portion of the Hills dwellers, refused to join his cult. Some of them approached Richard Clarke, who, to quote Mr. McGaghey, "didn't know which end of the gun to hold away from him when he pulled the trigger" and asked him about firearms. Mr. Clarke was embarrassed. But the answers came not from Mr. Clarke but from Deadwood Dick who snapped that such trivial questions were a downright insult to any man of his standing and experience.

Richard Clarke was pretty old when the entrepreneurs took him out of his job and apprised him of his true identity. If, as one has a right to suppose, he was twenty years old when he came to Deadwood in 1876, then he must have been seventy-one in 1927. By the early forties the years must have begun to catch up to him.

So presently he hung up the rifle that he probably had never learned to shoot and went on into the realm of the spirits, from which in a way he had come. He was mourned by most of the kids in Deadwood and by no small contingent of their skeptical elders. More people went to his funeral than had witnessed the burial of Wild Bill. His career was given large spreads in the picture sections.

There is little use in attempting to analyze such phenomena as this. Perhaps the comment of the late Big Bill Haywood provides as good an explanation as any. "When people go through a mill like these people have gone through, they're not cagey or skeptical," he said. "They'll believe anything, including their own history."

Some of the populace of the northern Hills is still putting flowers on Richard Clarke's grave. Other people, like Mr. McGaghey and Chambers Kellar, general counsel for the Homestake, ignore his existence while saying what they think about a homemade mythology.

"Richard Clarke or Richard Anybody-else is unimportant in a thing

like this" was Mr. Kellar's argument. "The figures in a Punch and Judy show don't mean anything. The real villain of the piece is the man who pulls the strings.

"I have never been able to figure out what the people of Deadwood were thinking about when they came out in a flat-footed endorsement of something they knew was phony. There has been a lot of hot air disseminated about Wild Bill and Calamity Jane but whatever else you could say about them you must admit one basic fact. They actually existed. . . . They were real human beings. People saw them here and talked to them.

"But Deadwood Dick was something entirely different. He was a fictional character fathered by an author who lived in New York.

"There isn't any doubt that Deadwood is one of the most interesting towns in America. I don't know of any other place where you are so conscious of the past while living in so modern a present. The reason for that is that the town was built well and adequately to begin with. It hasn't decayed and there's been no need to make it over. When you go up to the White Rocks you're looking at the same town that came up after the fire of 1879. Except for one or two buildings it is exactly the same town physically that it was in the eighties, the same town that was arming against Indian attacks and waiting for the arrival of the Sidney stage.

"There is one Western town that can put on any pageant it likes without having to worry about whether or not it looks authentic. It can't help but look authentic. And a lot of phony mumbo jumbo about a man who never was isn't going to make it any more interesting with the public."

Two of Richard Clarke's associates on the Tenderfoot Circuit were rigged out in fresh buckskins somewhat like his own and probably for that reason seemed to be just about as genuine as he was: Potato Creek Johnny and Poker Alice. A lot of travel-show visitors probably owe them an apology, for the both of them were very well documented and as real in their way as Harney Peak.

Quite likely you could call Johnny Perrett (Potato Creek Johnny) the last of the old prospectors. He had been looking for gold—mostly in odd corners of Spearfish Canyon—for more than fifty years when he died in Deadwood in 1943.

Perrett was born in Wales in 1867, came to the United States as a young man and with many of his countrymen drifted to the mine



fields in the Northwest. He settled on Potato Creek (not the Pine Ridge Potato Creek but the one directly west of Deadwood near the Wyoming line). And presently he found in his pan the biggest nugget ever seen in the Black Hills. It weighed seven and a half ounces and sounds heavier when you say it was nearly half a pound of gold.

He put in the rest of his life looking for another like it. But there weren't any—not where Johnny looked. He never made a really big strike although he took enough gold out of the creek bottoms to provide him with a fairly comfortable living. Each year found him hopeful—all prospectors were that way. Each year the winter cut off his work just as he was about to locate a bonanza. But in his business there was no such word as discouragement. He would drift back to Deadwood, find a place to live and get ready for next year.

"I'm not in any hurry," he would tell his friends. "I've got nothing else but time."

The last five years of his life found him a little weaker, a little less willing to clamber up and down canyon walls and wash gravel all day long. He was no longer enthusiastic over another look at Spearfish Creek or the uplands about Tinton.

"I've seen it all," he decided. And thereafter he sat around with a few old cronies discussing what they would do the next year or the year after next, providing they felt like it. In the meantime this was Deadwood and Deadwood hadn't changed much in fifty years.

Poker Alice Tubbs, who died during the Second World War, was in many ways the rare survival of the days in the Hills when frail womanhood was something hard to find west of St. Louis. She had some of the characteristics ascribed to Calamity Jane, particularly physical strength and an unbreakable will. In her later years she smoked cigars, spoke in the idiom of the camps and also looked rather hard. But she had one extra means of livelihood denied to Calamity Jane—a professional skill and feeling for poker.

Let us not be maudlin about Alice. Basically, and at heart, she was probably much like other tough female characters who came in on the early stage from Cheyenne. Whether or not she was a good poker player it is now difficult to say. But she did settle down to it as a business in the early eighties at least long enough to get her nickname.

Her earliest ventures were in private games in her own little rendezvous (or as they called it, her "house") in Sturgis where she felt that she would have the pay roll of the Seventh U. S. Cavalry as a backlog. On

a few occasions, it is alleged, she turned professional and some of our local police friends tell us she worked as a blackjack dealer for a few Meade County gambling houses that theoretically never existed.

During the First World War, in a moment of exuberance, she shot a soldier in her "house"—which by that time the local authorities had learned to call "brothel." He died instantly, minus most of the top of his head, and she was exonerated by a coroner's jury which suspected she might have done it in self-defense.

She was a popular number on the travel-show programs where she displayed a motherly solicitude toward Potato Creek Johnny and looked a lot tougher than she had any right to look, even with a cigar between her grim lips. She died in Rapid City in 1943, apparently content. The old home of the Seventh Cavalry had been broken up. Fort Meade had been turned into a hospital. . . . There didn't seem to be much object in playing poker any more.

## CHAPTER 24

### MEN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

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*DEADWOOD—A new hay yard and feed corral has been established on Lee Street in front of the Syndicate block. In the afternoon it is a cool shady place and when a hay team camps it fills up the street so there is no chance of a man getting run over.*

*—Deadwood Pioneer-Times*

JUDGE W. Y. Kuykendall, formerly of Wyoming and at the moment of nowhere in particular, was chairman of the meeting. He arose and looked into the solemn faces of hundreds of soiled, unshaved miners who filled all of upper Main Street and most of what other standing room remained in Deadwood Gulch. Somebody hoisted a flag to the top of the tree which two nights before would have been handy for a lynching if the proposed victim hadn't got away. There were loud cheers but they lasted only a minute and then the silence came again. The judge thought it might well be the quietest moment Deadwood had known since the big rush had begun a couple of months ago. For a Fourth of July demonstration, it seemed to him all this looked pretty ominous.

There wasn't even any hum of conversation as he stood there waiting for a party of eight or ten newcomers to park their horses. There wasn't even any nervousness, and that caused him to take another look at the glum eyes peering out of the forest of whiskers ahead of him. At home—back in Pennsylvania—such an attitude on the part of a mob would be a warning of a revolt or an uprising or something of the sort. He thought he understood the motivation. This fine, upstanding body of men had quarreled with the government of the United States on the matter of the treaty with the Sioux Indians. Every person who stood in front of him was there in direct violation of a Federal injunction. Many of them had been fugitives from the eviction of 1875 and nursed private grudges against the cavalry.

Some of the throng were drunk, but not many. It was hard to get properly drunk when you were as wrought-up as these people. They would consider the matter before them in a state of cool fury. And who knew what might come of it—an organized rebellion against the territory in which they found themselves, a show of strength against the cavalry, a declaration of war against the United States? It was something to take up gravely, Kuykendall decided—something to think about and all that, a very serious matter indeed. But nothing would come of it, so far as he could see. It would never do to start a rebellion against the territory until you found out which one you were in. To show your strength to the cavalry you would have to ride down as far as Fort Laramie because the soldiers had been withdrawn from the Hills. And to declare war against the United States would be a waste of time inasmuch as some authorities held that a state of war already existed between the empire builders of the northern Hills and the government that had outlawed them.

Fourth of July, 1876, the hundredth anniversary of the country's independence—and here in front of him a couple of thousand men without a country, hurt and angry but also bewildered by talk of international agreements and treaty obligations, all of them ready to fight or maybe to burst into tears. It was all very touching.

"My friends," the judge called out to them, "I have come here to ask you a question that needs no answer:

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land!"

As he paused there came a hush even deeper and more ominous than that which had gone before, then a roar of applause that reverberated between the canyon walls like an artillery salvo. Judge Kuykendall smiled, reassured. The country was in no danger today—not from these patriotic outlaws. None of these was going "down to the vile dust . . . unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung." Not if he could help it. . . . Three rousing cheers then for those other brave outlaws of Concord and Lexington—and some more for our President and his great cavalrymen! Three cheers for the flag which was one red stripe shorter because somebody's flannel petticoat hadn't been big enough—three cheers! Three cheers!

Joseph Miller, another detached jurist, was introduced as the orator

of the day. General A. R. Z. Dawson has been quoted as saying that Miller was in his best form that day and delivered a Fourth of July address to end all Fourth of July addresses for years to come. But so far as its practical effect on his audience was concerned it was all anti-climax. Kuykendall's choice of a poem had ended the war before it started.

General Dawson arose when Judge Miller had finished and read the Declaration of Independence. The audience gave it a stirring reception. And when the applause died down somewhat he reached the climax of the day's program, a memorial to Congress asking in effect that the ex-communicated citizenry of the Black Hills be forgiven their treaty-breaking activities and restored to grace. He suggested that this could be accomplished quickly were the government to violate the treaty officially. But nobody saw anything incongruous in the idea. By that time all the pioneers had got pretty tired of Indians.

The memorial was addressed: "To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives in Congress Assembled," and read:

Your memorialists, citizens of that portion of the Territory of Dakota known as the Black Hills, most respectfully petition your honorable body for speedy and prompt action in extinguishing the Indian title to and the opening for settlement of the country we are now occupying, developing and improving.

We have now in the Hills a population of at least seven thousand honest and loyal citizens who have come here in the expectation of remaining and making their homes here. Our country is rich, not alone in mineral resources but is abundantly supplied with timber and has a soil rich enough to produce all that will be necessary to sustain a large population.

Your memorialists would therefore earnestly request that we do not be deprived of the fruits of our labor and driven from the country that we now occupy, but that the government for which we have offered our lives at once extend a protecting arm and take us under its care . . . and as in duty bound your memorialists will ever pray.

The memorial was given a unanimous endorsement, after which it was wrapped in an envelope and sealed and stuck into a leather pouch which would be carried out of the Hills to Cheyenne the next time there was somebody going that way.

As the memorialists turned away from the ceremony toward the saloons, already glowing in anticipation of the day when they would

once more cast a vote and claim the protection of a proper court, many declared that they probably would never see a Fourth of July just like that one again. They were probably right.

Seasoned attorneys—and there were several of them in the Deadwood of 1876—probably enjoyed the attitude of the local petitioners which ignored the principle of going to court with clean hands.

The community which had no status whatever in the government's eyes shouldn't have had any status in the government's ears, either. But apparently it did. In February 1877 the United States signed a peace treaty with the Sioux tribes who may have taken a dim view of treaties but were no longer in a position to refuse it.

The Territory of Dakota organized three counties in the Black Hills. In Lawrence County, scene of the penitential Fourth of July celebration, Granville G. Bennett was appointed district judge and Seth Bullock, for many years afterward a power in the region, was named sheriff.

Thus theoretically law and order came to the northern Hills. The change might have been difficult to notice for anybody interested in insurance statistics. There seemed to be no lull in homicide. Men still thought it necessary to kill one another for a variety of reasons. The difference under the new order was that the survivor got his acquittal in a court through the agency of twelve men on a jury instead of by acclamation.

There was one effect on the social status of the town, however. Crook's soldiers no longer had to travel in platoons when they came to town to keep the irate populace from murdering them. It was now possible for them to wander safely into saloons in pairs or one at a time. On the other hand if they happened to come in squads the citizens no longer found it necessary to take cover.

Toward the end of the year General Crook himself came up from a camp near Bear Butte, just to see if the incredible Deadwood was anything like its descriptions. A few of the officers who accompanied him on the visit seemed a little nervous, despite the lavishness of the impromptu refreshments provided in their honor. One of their group, Captain Pollock of the Ninth Infantry, is said to have asked permission to leave the party at Crook City which might have been discreet inasmuch as some of the miners in the northern Hills still blamed him for all the troubles of 1875 including the deep snow.

General Crook, however, never seemed to give a thought to the possibility that some of the settlers might have taken the great eviction

order as something personal. He rode into town without advance guard or fanfare, made an official call on the mayor, the district judge and the sheriff, and then started out afoot along Main Street to meet the newly accredited citizens.

He spent most of the afternoon shaking hands with people whom he had chased out of town and out of the Hills. He seemed to think it had all been a great joke. And when they thought the matter over, they did too.

# CHAPTER 25

## THE HOMESTAKE

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*LEAD—Lead, S. Dak., is the home of the Homestake, the greatest gold mine in the world. . . .*

—BROCHURE PUBLISHED BY BLACK  
HILLS MINING MEN'S ASSOCIATION, 1904

IN FLOOD and O'Brien's Saloon, next door to San Francisco's Mining Exchange, J. B. Haggin picked up the morning paper and whistled.

"It says here," he told Mr. Flood, "that Custer has found gold in the Black Hills. I wonder if George would be interested in that."

"It's a long ways to them Black Hills," commented Mr. Flood.

"It's a long way to gold no matter where they find it," observed the experienced Mr. Haggin. . . .

In his Market Street office, Senator George Hearst had read the news before Mr. Haggin arrived to repeat it.

"I've had some pretty good reports about copper around Butte City up in Montana Territory," he said. "And that's not so far from this Black Hills country that Kellogg can't take a look at them both."

"It's a placer strike and it may not mean anything," observed Haggin.

"Placer gold has to come from some source," said Senator Hearst. "We'll look at it."

Up in Portland, Oregon, Moses Manuel, a much-weathered prospector, was trying to arrange for transportation back over the Oregon Trail to his old home in Ohio.

Moses at that time was about ready to quit gold hunting—at least he was as near to quitting as a gold hunter ever gets. He had been wandering around over the frozen tundras of Alaska and he saw no future in it. It was beginning to be apparent that there was no future in rainbow chasing anywhere. Alaska had been cold. Mexico had been hot. Virginia City, Nevada, had been both. And in all of them the miner was just a middleman who took the gold out of the ground and gave it to somebody who put it in his—or her—sock. It was a business to be well out



of, he thought. But that was before he heard about General Custer's stop on French Creek.

In Helena, Montana, Fred Manuel, another professional rainbow chaser, was taking a last look at Last Chance Gulch when he got a letter from his brother Moses saying he was coming around to find out what Fred thought of this rumor out of the Black Hills. Fred, who knew all the signs, began to pack up his kit. Moses arrived in Helena a week after his letter. . . . Both had been a long time on the road.

The Manuel brothers, who hadn't heard about the eviction of the pioneers, got to Custer City late in 1875 and found nothing there that interested them.

"We're not likely to get what we need here," said Moses. "I want to make enough of a stake so's I can go home and sit down." At least that's what his volunteer biographers in Lead say he said. . . . Anyway the pair loitered only briefly with Captain Jack Crawford, "the poet scout," and other illegal residents of Custer City. Late in December, they pushed off in the weather to the northern Hills. A little cold meant nothing to either of them.

They filed on some placer claims in Bobtail Gulch. But they weren't too much interested in them, either. In March 1876 they came into Gold Run Gulch and found gold-bearing quartz but had to wait until the snow melted before they could look for the lode (or lead). They got a chance to go to work about the third of April and on the ninth struck rich ore.

"This," Fred said to his brother, "looks like the home stake you were talking about." And it was so recorded. Hank Harney was listed with the Manuels as locator. The three found a suitable spot in Whitewood Gulch, near where Pluma later sprang up, built a crude arrastra (a crushing device using heavy rocks as pestles) and that winter took \$5,000 in gold out of Homestake ore.

In February 1876, Moses Manuel bought an interest in the Golden Terra, a near-by claim, the name of whose discoverer has been lost. The Homestake and the Golden Terra were the mines that most interested the engineer L. D. Kellogg, representing George Hearst, J. B. Haggin and Lloyd Tevis, when he finally got to the Black Hills from Montana in June 1877. Kellogg, who was a practical miner of long experience, didn't carry his investigation of the properties much farther than the arrastra. He bonded the Homestake for \$70,000 and the Terra for \$35,000 and made a quick trip back to San Francisco.

He returned in a month with Messrs. Hearst and Haggin, who took

up the bond immediately and looked about for additional claims. With no haggling whatever, they bought the Old Abe in which the Manuel brothers were also interested and the Golden Star, a promising bit of property adjoining the original Homestake claim. Other purchases were in prospect when Senator Hearst finally boarded the stage for Sidney to catch the U. P. train for home. On November 5, 1877, he presided at the incorporation, under the laws of California, of the Homestake Mining Company. It was more or less a routine performance for the Senator who had taken part in many a similar promotion. He was sufficiently pleased with the prospects he had seen in Gold Run to invest his own money freely in their development. But it is hardly likely that he realized even then what a gold mine he had.

Once, long ago, I talked with Colonel W. C. Thornby, then in charge of the assay office in Deadwood, about the peculiarities of Dakota gold production.

"Well," he said. "There's any quantity of gold here—but it's like water at the bottom of a deep well. To get it out you've got to prime the pump." And if anybody were to ask me what made the Homestake one of the greatest producers in the history of the world while other promising enterprises were strewing every gulch in the northern Hills with rusty machinery and collapsing buildings, I should say it was an unfailing ability to prime the pump.

"You can't get money out of Black Hills gold mines unless you put money in" was Colonel Thornby's dictum. "And the trick is to maintain a favorable differential between what you put in and what you take out." Nobody ever learned that trick so well as the magicians who carried out the orders of the Senator, and later of Phoebe Hearst his widow, in the operations of the Homestake.

Hearst got started in Gold Run, convinced, no doubt, that he had bought a mountain of ore worth around \$50 a ton. He was to learn that he hadn't. But in the long run it made no difference. He knew what to do with what he had.

The first official act of the new company was to buy an eighty-stamp mill from Prescott, Scott & Company, of San Francisco. This machinery had to be shipped by rail to Sidney and thence dragged by ox teams 300 miles to Lead. The total cost of it delivered to Homestake Hill was something over \$140,000.

While it was on the way a building was being constructed to house it near a shaft on the first Manuel claim and mechanics were waiting to seize upon it piecemeal as it came off the drags and set it in place.

The stamps began to drop on July 12, 1878, which looks like something of a record for the course.

It was barely in operation when other mills started moving toward the Hills from the Pacific Coast. Mass production, so generally credited to the automobile industry, had its prototype in Gold Run as early as 1880. By 1883 6 mills and 580 stamps were pulverizing a mountaintop in a region where a twenty-stamp mill was still looked upon as a pretty big installation.

Mining experts, among them Louis Janin, a San Francisco engineer, agreed that something new had been brought to gold mining by the Homestake. But nobody was yet sure just what. Somebody had evolved a new idea for over-all production but in such a hurry that he hadn't revised any of the intermediate steps. The techniques of the Homestake in getting the ore out of the ground were those of Cripple Creek and Last Chance Gulch, only multiplied. Shafts were sunk to 600 feet and levels opened up at 100-foot intervals—this was in the pattern of the Comstock. So was the system of square-set timbering in places where an open cut would have been more practicable—and cheaper.

The treatment of the ore was likewise simple and time-honored. The rock, pounded to an impalpable powder in water, was washed down over copper plates coated with mercury. The mercury picked up the minute particles of gold in an amalgam from which it was later separated in a retort. As milling practice improved, the metallurgists were able to announce that Homestake techniques were recovering 75 per cent of the gold in the ore . . . so that out of every \$4,000,000 worth of gold hauled up out of the ground in the eighties and nineties, \$1,000,000 went down the drain.

The Homestake wasn't alone on the hilltop during those early years. Four other companies were operating in the vicinity, all of them well-financed and sitting over prospect holes that were just as good as the Homestake's. There was the Highland adjoining the Homestake on the north with the Deadwood-Terra and Father De Smet farther on. To the northeast lay the claim of the Caledonia. And because of the investment represented in these projects and the close quarters in which they had to operate they did business in a battle that was almost continuous.

It has been said that the wrangle over water rights between the De Smet and the Homestake was one of the most bitterly contested litigations in the history of Lawrence County. Judge Gideon C. Moody rendered a decision that has become recognized as the best law on riparian

rights since it was sustained by the United States Supreme Court. But that didn't end the controversy. Both companies wanted to get the contract to supply water to Deadwood for "fire and domestic purposes." Not only would the deal give a good financial return, but a mining company serving the community as a public utility would be less open to criticism as a water grabber.

A referendum on the matter was ordered with consequences nobody could have foreseen. In the first place there was some difficulty finding out who had a right to vote. Deadwood was the mining capital of South Dakota and every miner or prospective miner in the northern Hills claimed it as his legal residence although he might be grubbing on a claim somewhere down on French Creek. The big mines had their advocates and cheer leaders even among men who had never seen any of them and the populace automatically took sides as if the De Smet-Homestake struggle had been a species of football game, and there followed skulduggery of metropolitan extent and character.

Somebody brought in a couple of trainloads of champagne over the North Western bull freight from Bismarck, and on election day gallons of it were dispensed free of charge at "information booths" near the polling places—all this through the courtesy of the Homestake. Loyal proponents of the De Smet started voting early and often, despite the temptations of the Homestake's wine. About two o'clock in the afternoon they packed the voting places and the street outside so that nobody else could get within fifty feet of a ballot box. In spite of all this, the Homestake won—a blow from which the De Smet Company never completely recovered.

One by one during the late nineties, the Homestake absorbed its competitors along what the locals call the "belt," Gold Run, Whitewood and Deadwood gulches. In 1901 when the last of the group came under Homestake operation, Charles W. Merrill, a consulting engineer, reported that it would be profitable to treat the mine's tailings with cyanide. The Deadwood slime plant started operation in 1907 and the cyanidation of the tailings increased the total recovery of gold from 75 to 95 per cent. Since that time the company has been putting back into the creek only \$1,000,000 in gold out of every \$20,000,000.

Mass production has saved the mine during the bad years and some of them have been pretty bad. Along about 1900 the ore was paying \$10 a ton, about a quarter of what the Manuel brothers were hammering out with their crude arrastra. During the twenties it was running around \$2.50, only a little less than the cost of mining. Once in that

period it had gone so low that the Homestake was kept from a continuous loss only by ten cents' worth of silver that began to show up in every ton.

In recent years a detailed study of the ore body has led to more efficient operation. Instead of digging out the entire width of the gold-bearing formation, the underground crews under the close guidance of engineers now avoid the sort of ore that cannot be milled at a profit. The skill of this direction is seen in the fact that over a long period, now, the gold yield has been almost constant at  $4/10$  of an ounce to the ton or \$14 worth at the present price of \$35 a ton.

Hunting for the needle in the haystack with millions of dollars' worth of equipment and a couple of armies for help has been a tremendously successful operation for the Homestake. From time to time it has been rated the most important gold mine in the world. In the extent of its workings it probably still is. Viewed across its seventy-odd years of history it has been the greatest single producer in the memory of man. Before the war it was listed as number four in the annual production of gold; the other nine of the first ten gold mines were in South Africa.

The Homestake in modern times has no more visible relationship to the sourdough with his pick and pan than the rubber industry to a Peruvian's chewing gum. It is a tremendous, sprawling factory, a cross between a super-laboratory, a foundry and a steam laundry, much like any industrial plant on earth except for the virtual invisibility of its product. Men who handle the drills in the lower workings may go on for years without ever seeing anything that remotely resembles gold. The ore, hoisted to the top at a rate of 4,100 tons a day, rolls through the crushers and stamps and thence to the cyaniding vats almost automatically. If you stand there for a full shift, \$67,400 will have gone through the mill. But nobody is going to recognize it as such save the crew that finally gets it ready for reburial in Fort Knox.

Where are the mines of yesteryear, the Montezuma and the Whizzers and the Wasp No. 2 and the Oro Hondo and the Hidden Treasure and the Golden Reward and the Bismarck and the Gold Eagle and the Rex and the Spanish R. and the Lucky Strike and the Vulcan and the Clara Belle and the Aberdeen and the Dakota Calumet—and a couple of hundred others? You'll be hard put to find a gulch in the Hills without running across tangles of their long-rusted hopes. Many of these started out with more faith than could have been justified in the Homestake; no doubt a great number of them had better ore. But they never got out enough high-grade ore to give them security against a treacherous

future. They never could get the tremendous financial backing required to make a fortune out of small change. There seem to have been too many Midases in the early days and not enough Woolworths. The Homestake is definitely a ten-cent-store operation—but aside from a few prospect holes, experimental diggings and hand-to-mouth bonanzas in forgotten gulches, it is virtually the only producing gold mine in the Black Hills.

It seems likely to stay in business for a long time. It is paradoxical that a gold mine should turn out to be one of the country's most stable institutions—but there you are. The two principal shafts are now down to a depth of a mile and the mine has a blocked-out reserve of 20,000,000 tons of ore—enough to insure operation for something more than 13 years. There are 150 miles of tunnels and 80 miles of narrow-gauge railway on its 37 levels.

In a year the Homestake builds 7 miles of underground tunnels, sets off some 3,000,000 sticks of dynamite, sharpens 1,250,000 pieces of steel, uses 16,000,000 board feet of lumber and timber, produces 60,000,000 kilowatts of power—enough to light nearly all the cities in South Dakota—and aside from 15,000,000 tons of ore, handles 600,000 tons of waste rock. The new hoists, which are the mine's chief tourist attraction, will lift a load of 9 tons from a depth of a mile in 2 minutes. The cages are under constant control of the rider through radio telephone with the hoist.

Recent construction has included the rebuilding of the original cyanide sand plant, an 18,000,000-board-foot sawmill at Spearfish, a coal-burning steam plant of 20,000 horsepower, a 50-per-cent addition to the south mill and the new Yates shaft. Treasure hunting is not only expensive but, one hopes, endless.

Not so long ago I spoke with Chambers Kellar, general counsel for the Homestake, on this fascinating subject.

"It seems strange to me that there should be so little successful mining of precious metals," I said. "Surely there is as much gold in the ground as ever was taken out."

"Well," he said judiciously, "that is one theory. The other theory is that there isn't."

## CHAPTER 26

### GOLD FOR GOLD

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LEAD—*Engineering preliminaries have been completed for the construction of a narrow gauge line from Gayville to Lead by the Chicago & North Western Railway company. The road which is to be hung on the mountain-side with steel basketry will be one of the most remarkable examples of railroad building in the West.*

—*Lead Daily Call, December 31, 1901*

ROBERT HENRY DRISCOLL came to Lead in 1883 and kept a meticulous diary for about fifty years. It is thanks to him that we know something about the people who kept out of jail—and out of the newspapers—during the years when the Black Hills country was growing up.

It is surprising to learn, among other things, that possibly fifty per cent of the men who came to Deadwood Gulch and Gold Run in the first five years after Pearson's strike had no intention whatever of going out with a pick and pan to canvass the creeks. And some of them lived to be eighty years old without ever knowing what a sluice box looked like.

When you get away from glamour and down to a little simple arithmetic there was a great deal of resemblance between a gold rush and the Louisiana lottery. Some people got rich, some got a little money, some got nothing. But thousands of folks got a lot of high hopes. The Black Hills stampede came when money was scarce and young men still believed that any change was for the better. So the trails filled up with travelers to the Dakotas "looking for their luck."

Simple arithmetic would have told them that there were about fifteen would-be miners for every prospect hole in the Hills. But they went anyway. It made no difference.

They were all adventurers, just as Wild Bill and Wyatt Earp were adventurers, but they didn't necessarily have to do their adventuring with the same equipment or on the same side of the street. You might

get the idea from reading a résumé of the coroner's reports that they were all bums, misfits and illiterates. But that doesn't follow either—not on the face of Driscoll's evidence. It can hardly be proved at this date but it is quite likely that the rate of literacy in Deadwood in 1880 was probably higher than that of any community of comparable population in Maine.

It was Driscoll's idea that there were three distinct types of men in the migration of the late seventies and early eighties. One group was made up of professional gold hunters who had survived murder and mayhem in half a dozen previous camps and came to the northern Hills almost directly from a land of similar promise in Montana. They were much as Western literature, then and now, has described them. They constituted what Seth Bullock once called "a loud minority."

A second group was made up of unsettled veterans of the Civil War. In the third category went victims of the panic of 1873. These two, Mr. Driscoll noted, were hardly to be classed as fortune hunters. They were men of courage and character, many of them with remarkable records for bravery in battle. Many more had been successful in business or professions until ruined by an economic depression. They were men above the average as citizens, he said in his written record, a remarkable breed mentally, as in physique they were a race of giants.

Robert H. Driscoll was himself a graduate of Harvard University and in 1882 had been an instructor at Williams College. His first trip to the West had been made with Marvin Hughitt, Jr., and he had returned at the suggestion of Homestake officials to become superintendent of the public schools of Lead.

He recalled that his first roommate in Deadwood was a Princeton graduate. One of his associates had been a congressman from Kentucky. And he came to know numerous businessmen who had been in responsible positions in the East.

Deadwood and Lead were filled up with smart young lawyers. W. Y. Kuykendall, who presided over the rump court that tried Jack McCall, had actually been a judge over in Wyoming. Joseph Miller, an able orator, was another judge without portfolio. So was H. N. McGuire of Montana City. A. J. Plowman, the "Little Man with the Big Voice," who defended Crow Dog for the murder of Spotted Tail, would have been given attention before any bar in the country. And, of course, there were the professionals, Granville G. Bennett and Gideon C. Moody, who had come to the Hills in line of duty.

The newspapermen of the period were bright, alert and considerably



better educated than the average young men writing for a living in the big cities. Joseph Gossage of Rapid City was one. W. C. Bonham who ran the *Deadwood Pioneer-Times* for many years was another. Richard Hughes, Gene Decker, W. J. Thornby and Porter Warner were reporters whose signatures meant something.

Not all of the pioneers who came to do deeds of high emprise of one sort or another continued in the way in which they had set out. Ellis T. "Doc" Peirce, who wrote some of the best humorous prose ever seen in the neighborhood, was by turns a barber, mortician and deputy sheriff. James Halley, a telegraph operator who opened the first line out of Deadwood in 1876, got a job as a bank teller and became a financier. One of Robert Driscoll's collegemates used to call on him occasionally when he came in from his ranch near Medora; but he decided to quit ranching and become the President of the United States. . . . His name was Theodore Roosevelt.

Driscoll himself gave a second thought to his career. He resigned as school superintendent in 1886 to become territorial auditor, which post he filled for three years. He was court auditor in 1889 and 1890, clerk of the court between 1891 and 1893 and entered the First National Bank of Lead as cashier. He stayed with that institution until his death as president in 1932, writing every day in a fine copperplate hand the story of the region's principal market—the market in gold.

Theoretically all banks deal in gold, even now when nobody from the president to the janitor ever sees any gold except in fountain pens and teeth. The banks in Driscoll's neighborhood, however, kept their shelf stocks in yellow dust instead of paper. And by selling gold for gold, they contrived to make quite a nice bit of money. The handling charge was ten per cent or two dollars an ounce all over the Hills. In Rapid City it was not unusual for a bank to show a hundred dollars' profit in a single day for the work of delivering the dust or bullion to the U. S. assay office and getting a certified check for it. On one peak day in 1883 the profit from twelve such transactions added up to two hundred dollars.

Robert E. Driscoll, who succeeded his father as president of the Lead bank in 1932, has compiled some interesting data concerning this end of the business. In his book *Seventy Years of Banking in the Black Hills* he describes the almost fanatical attitude of the pioneer with regard to money. Greenbacks were in circulation but not too numerous. Everybody carried gold dust or nuggets in sacks or bottles. The most important piece of equipment in a bank or mercantile establishment

was an elaborate weighing device. And gold was the only money that counted.

Generally there were two prices for all merchandise—the gold price and the greenback price. The greenback price was ten per cent higher.

Gold dealing appears to have had its own peculiar jargon, not to say etiquette. When a bank got a two-dollar commission for selling twenty dollars' worth of gold to the government it was not good form to set down the gain in the ledgers as "profit." Apparently banks weren't supposed to make any profit, or if they were, they weren't supposed to brag about it. Where "profit" might appear above the last column in anybody else's book there appeared the more acceptable word "coined." Maybe that was the origin of the expression that the banks "coined money."

After the placer deposits played out and dust seldom came over a receiving teller's counter, gold coin continued to circulate through the Hills. By the turn of the century paper money was virtually unknown. Not until the creation of the Federal Reserve Bank in 1913 began to bring about some confidence in paper did gold disappear from western South Dakota's daily business.

During the panic of 1907 Lead faced a gold crisis that probably could not have occurred anywhere else in the country. This depression, as Robert E. Driscoll points out, was strictly a money panic. People who had currency were holding onto it. Unable to get money enough to do business, the banks began to hand out certificates that looked like currency and whose value was guaranteed by all the members of a given clearinghouse group. Officials of the Homestake Mine, who were turning over great quantities of gold in exchange for somebody's promise to pay for the gold sometime in gold, took a dim view of this procedure. And T. J. Grier, superintendent of the Homestake, was at that time president of the First National Bank at Lead.

Grier and R. H. Driscoll, the vice-president, demanded that gold coins be paid in exchange for Homestake bullion. The Mint officials and the Treasury Department argued in great consternation but in the end they gave in. The Lead and Deadwood banks stayed on a gold and silver basis, and they were the only two banks in the United States that did.

The deal, as Robert E. Driscoll recalls, had an aftermath:

In 1933 when the bank holiday was on, something of the same scheme was tried. And it worked the second time as a result of which

the miners of the Black Hills were paid by money instead of by check as was done in other parts of the country.

Gold was not available but currency was. The Homestake demanded money from the mint instead of a treasury check and the mint was forced to accede. The first shipment that arrived during the bank holiday contained \$500,000 in currency and was all in five, ten and twenty dollar bills. It took the entire force all one day to count this deposit, and an amusing commentary is that the Homestake officials in New York were advised that Uncle Sam might freeze even the money that came into the banks after the Holiday started if left on deposit. Therefore, the next day it had to be counted over again as it was withdrawn and taken to the Homestake office for payroll purposes.

The climax came two days later when the banks were permitted to open for "new business." The money came back to the bank from the Homestake office and was counted a third time. It was indeed wellworn and well counted when it finally was passed out over the counter in return for pay checks.

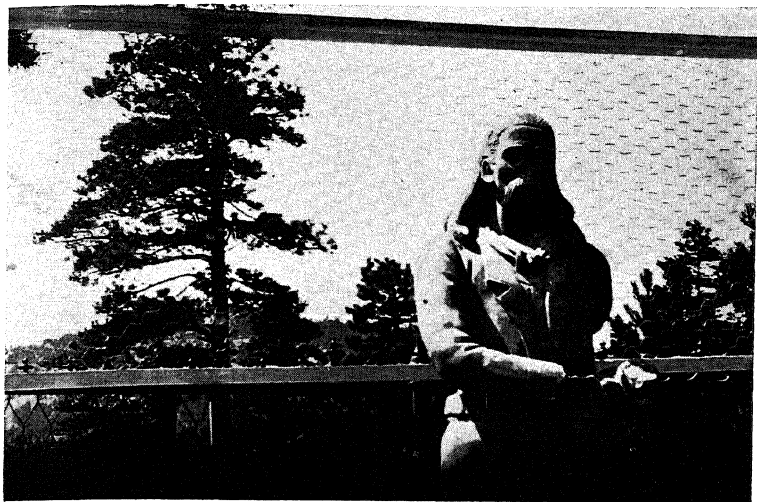
So far as gold is concerned, Bob Driscoll seems to feel some nostalgia for the days that are gone. He shares the emotions of one of his own tellers who threatened to quit rather than give out paper to long-standing customers. He says:

During the years when gold was the popular medium of exchange, people for the most part, paid their bills in gold and not by check. Even many business men used gold to settle their accounts and each deposit from a business house during the day was made up of a preponderance of gold. It is also true that people in pioneer days carried more money on their persons, and when a citizen hung up his trousers before going to bed at night he frequently had to have a reinforced hook. The trousers might contain from \$500 to a thousand dollars in gold; and a thousand dollars in gold coin would weigh more than three pounds. Also I can remember visiting safety deposit boxes, with representatives of estates of deceased citizens, to find the boxes full of gold.

Upon the transition to paper money, more than one customer left the teller's cage irate because the bank tried to palm off on him "a lot of filthy paper."

This era has passed but it was part of the pioneer psychology of a gold country. . . .

What Bob Driscoll fails to touch on in his book is the value of personality, long acquaintances and similar intangibles in Black Hills banking. When the banks were beginning to pop before the moratorium



Wild Bill's third monument, Mount Moriah, Deadwood.



Near-by grave of widely advertised Calamity Jane.



numerous customers came into the First National of Rapid City, headquarters of the Driscoll group, and drew out their money. A pair of ranchers at the head of the line looked at the bills in their hands and discussed what they were going to do next. Their decision, openly announced, was seconded by perhaps half a dozen others.

They all stood around the counter while the teller, facing an unprecedented demand for currency, made frequent trips to the vault. Then the group moved away from the cages to the president's office.

"We took our money out of the bank because banks are in trouble," said the spokesman. "But we've got to have somebody to take care of it and we're wondering if you'd do that for us."

Bob Driscoll thanked them for their confidence in him, gave each of them a receipt and put the money back into the vault where it had come from. . . .

Sometime before 1933 Driscoll had bought \$1,000,000 in gold bars for the reserve of the Lead bank at the standard rate of \$20.67 an ounce. As a feature of the bank holiday the government called in all gold and raised the price to \$35 an ounce. How to carry this metal in the inventory was something of a problem to the bookkeepers. But the Treasury Department's purchasing agents solved all that. They bought back the Lead bank's gold at \$20.67.

The transaction left the Driscoll banks clean. The president himself had some gold of his own. He'd been collecting it for some time—a bit of flake from Wasp No. 2, a tiny nugget from the Father De Smet, a yellow sliver from the Oro Hondo, a few grains of golden sand from the Homestake—specimens of no great intrinsic worth from nearly all the once-fabulous producers in the Hills. He found out that even such museum exhibits as these came under the Federal edict.

"I'm allowed to keep a hundred dollars' worth," he said. "But I don't know whether that's five ounces under the old price or two and eight-tenths ounces at the new price or a couple of grains at a collector's appraisal."

He turned it all in. . . .

# CHAPTER 27

## THE STAGE RIDERS

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DEADWOOD—A stagecoach on the Gilmer and Salisbury line from Cheyenne arrived in Deadwood today with eight passengers and Captain C. V. Gardner, an escort. Dave Dickey, formerly on the Overland route to California, was driver. Captain Gardner stated that the coach had made the trip almost without incident. Several other coaches on the same line had been forced to turn back by the open hostility of Indian bands.

—Deadwood Pioneer-Times, January 1880

ONE of the best-known facts about the old stagecoaches is that they never went anywhere except at a gallop. Often we've seen them on the covers of those fine old source books on Western history, the dime novels, and recently we've seen them, too, in technicolor. And time has not altered their routine since first they made the perilous journey from the front to the rear of Buffalo Bill's tent: the driver, tensely bending forward half out of the boot, staring into space over the shapeless mass that is six plunging horses. Sometimes the Indians are behind him. Sometimes Dunc Blackburn and his ruthless road agents lurk in the crevasse ahead. Always the coach is riding on two wheels on the thin edge of a precipice. No artist would think of depicting stages in any other position because everybody knows by tradition just how they looked and just how they performed. . . .

"Climb in, lady! We're rollin' out of Old Cheyenne for the Indian country in two minutes. . . . Where you say you're goin'? Hat Creek? Fine! That's only about a hundred and seventy-five or six miles. We'll git you there in a coupla hours! Giddap, Dobbin; Giddap, Ole Paint! Giddap, Gidapple Gray! Leave us run like the wind till the break of the morn. . . ." Or words to that effect. The lines governing the departure of the coach have become as ritualistic as a radio commercial

and have been known to every man, woman and child in America since the advent of talking pictures.

There are still some people in the Hills who remember the arrival of the stagecoach in Custer or Deadwood or Rapid City—the tom-tom beat of horses' hoofs on the distant hill; the little misty cloud coming over the rim, a grayish little cloud smudging the clean emptiness of the sky; the larger cloud, growing still larger as it emerges from the pine clump down the slope; a rising tide of noise, a massed chorus of hysterical cheering as the six wild horses come charging down Main Street at full tilt with the glamorous carriage bouncing off its leather springs behind them.

"Magnificent, they were," old Mr. Frank Roberts, the lath maker, used to tell me whenever some new poster advertising a moving-picture stagecoach appeared on the billboard near our sawmill. "I've seen them come into Deadwood time and time again. The finest horseflesh west of the Missouri and the fastest. You'd never think that the stage had been rolling along without a stop except to change teams, maybe, for a couple of hundred miles. Maybe the coach was dusty. But everything else looked pretty slick.

"The horses were all done up in fresh leather with big silver buckles. And there were silver knobs on the collars and silver trim on the bridles. And they came into that town lickety-cut with Harvey Fellows yelling at 'em and banging 'em across the rump with his whip. It was a show, I'm tellin' you, boy! It was certainly a show. . . .

"But, of course, we all knowed that's what it was—a show. They should have put it on in Cheyenne or Sidney before a lot of people that never had to ride in one of those things. Up here there wasn't one of us that hadn't come in from the outside. And when we come in we had to ride stagecoaches or something pretty-like. We knew them horses hadn't been hittin' that gait all the way from Cold Springs—maybe not even from Pluma. These six horses was the stars of the whole line, picked for speed. The only time they ever saw the prairie was on the first trip up. After that they'd been kept in a good barn somewheres this side of Cheyenne Crossin' with nothin' to do but put on their act, the dash in and the dash out.

"The silver trimmings, well, that was costume or scenery. It never got more than five miles away from the terminal barn. It would have looked silly out there on the flats anyway. Fancy harness looks kinda out of place on a lot of nags tryin' to get somewheres at two miles an hour."



And, of course, we always shook our heads sadly and reprovingly at this heresy because we knew the truth. Like everybody else but old Mr. Roberts, we knew that the noble steeds of the Cheyenne-Deadwood stage line would rather have dropped dead in their tracks than be caught at a walk or slow trot. We knew of the high efficiency that directed their meteoric course across the roadless wilderness. We could see the station agents and stock tenders leaping into action as the thundering advance of the horses came echoing out of the night. . . . A sudden call from the approaching driver, a sudden stop, weird movements of a lantern as men move quickly and silently in front of the coach. . . . Horses lumping up through the shadows . . . other horses fading away. The erratic movement of the lantern back toward the corral . . . a bored voice speaking almost in a whisper: "All done, Jimmy. Get 'em out of here!" And then once more the swift exhilarating dash through the night. . . .

We knew all that. But we never were very glib at explaining how the stage from Pierre sometimes happened to be two weeks late.

The stagecoach business had had a long and honorable career in the United States at the time the railroads began to move across the country. There were plenty of experienced operators who looked on the discovery of gold in the Black Hills as a happy dispensation of Providence. Not because any of them had much thought of going to Custer or Deadwood Gulch with a pick and pan, but because other men would be going there and a lot of old stage equipment and veteran horses could prolong their service for a number of years. The existence of large quantities of the things necessary for the maintenance of a stage line is one reason why coaches were running into the Hills on regular schedule a few days after the cavalry came out.

The first requirement, of course, was to survey a trail. But that was no complicated process. The civilian scouts and guides who had served Crook's troops were just as willing to serve somebody else. And had there been no scouts or guides, the pioneer stage drivers would never have gone far wrong following the tracks left by a regiment of horse.

There was no particular order about the trails which the earliest settlers followed. The Gordon party, for instance, came from Sioux City northwest along the Missouri, crossed the Niobrara, wandered across the prairie and Bad Lands and skirted the Hills until they picked up the outbound tracks of Custer's expedition about four miles below Sturgis. This trail was vivid enough to lead them up Box Elder Creek, over the

Divide to Rapid Creek, thence south along Slate, Castle and Spring creeks to a point near Custer. A straight line was no longer the shortest distance between two points when such unknown quantities were involved as government patrols and Indians. When the rush started each newcomer began to follow in somebody else's footprints until presently there were dozens, possibly hundreds, of indirect but passable routes to French Creek. In picking among them the stage scouts had only to look for one that seemed to have borne some traffic in both directions. So their first choice fell on an old cavalry lane that came north, roughly along the route of the present U. S. 85.

Within a few days after the scouts had made a trip over this trail its course was charted in the Cheyenne office by means of easily identifiable landmarks: Nine Mile, Pole Creek, Horse Creek, Bear Springs, Chugwater, Hunton, Chug Springs, Eagle's Nest, Six Mile, Fort Laramie, Swing Station, Ten Mile, Government Farm, Rawhide Buttes, Running Water, Hat Creek, Old Woman, Lance Creek, Robbers' Roost, Cheyenne River, Jenney's Stockade, Hell's Canyon, Red Canyon, Eighteen Mile, Twelve Mile, Four Mile, Custer City.

As always adapting itself to new conditions the line went north with the Deadwood stampede—on from Jenney's Stockade past Fanny's Peak and thence, by way of Beaver Creek, Canyon Springs, Cold Springs, Little Meadow and Ten Mile to Deadwood.

Toward the end of 1876 John Brennan had convinced Messrs. Gilman and Salisbury, leading transportation entrepreneurs of Cheyenne, that a route from Sidney, Nebraska, to Deadwood via Buffalo Gap and Rapid City would be not only shorter but more easily followed in winter. So then there were a new series of stations: Greenwood, Clark's Bridge, Red Willow, Running Water, Hay Meadows, Dear Creek, White Earth, Red Cloud, Wells, Horsehead, Buffalo Gap, Lame Johnny Creek, French Creek, Maverick (Hermosa), Rapid City, Sidney Stockade (Stage Barn Canyon), Elk Creek Canyon, Boulder Canyon, Deadwood.

By March 1877 two other companies were moving in and out on regular schedule, the Fort Pierre line and an ambitious outfit making use of the trail left by General Custer from Bismarck to the northern Hills. It called itself the Northwestern and advertised its willingness to carry passengers, alone or with some assistance, to all points in the United States and Europe.

By that time the isolation of this weird spot was just about finished. Quite a lot of the pioneers got tired of it all. The *Deadwood Pioneer-Times* reported on August 19, 1877, that three hundred unlucky miners

had left for Sidney in one day. But there seems to have been no permanent drop in the level of population. So far as one can judge by the sheriff's records the competing stage lines began to haul two customers into Deadwood for every one they hauled out—all of the newcomers highwaymen surveying new fields for stage robbery.

Sam Bass, a run-of-the-mine hoodlum celebrated in the song and story of Texas, was among the early comers. With him came Joel Collins, one of his professional associates. Lame Bradley came and recruited a gang from such volunteers as Fly Specked Billy. Duncan Blackburn, a road agent who had had experience in the Montana fields, brought John Wall and some others into the northern Hills. And presently the woods were full of them.

The law officers of the time seem to have been under no illusion about what was going on around them. They had the name, if not the immediate address, of all the thugs who rode out of Cheyenne or Sidney or Fort Pierre. Much of the time they knew well in advance where these people were hiding out. But for a while there was peace, probably because the highwaymen had an intelligence bureau of their own and knew that they were being watched.

Stage robbery was a serious business in the early days in the Hills—more serious even than horse stealing, which was still a capital offense. The sentimental old buffers who waved the flag and pledged their fealty to the homeland that looked on them as outlaws were accustomed to stop work each morning to see the stage go out and again in the afternoon to cheer one arriving. To them—and they represented the majority thought of Deadwood—it was a bit of home that came back to them, filled with cheery letters and tintypes of relatives and sometimes Christmas presents such as neckties and celluloid collars and home-made razor cleaners.

Nobody was completely cut off from the gracious living he had known in the world outside—at such spots as Lost Gulch, Nevada, or Bangtaylor's Boardinghouse, Denver—while the stage was working so diligently to preserve the bond. "Nobody," said a forgotten editorialist for the *Pioneer*, "nobody can get to be a real badman when he's only a couple of days from his own doorstep. The fast stages are fixing it up so a man will probably have to go all the way to the Canadian woods before he can be really ornery."

And Fred Doten, himself an old-time driver, laughed at some stranger's suggestion that white gunmen might one day cause more trouble than the Indians.

"Nobody would rob a stage," he declared with the solemn air of one quoting from the gospels, "because the stage is something that belongs to every one of us. It's ours—and nobody would be fool enough to rob himself."

Well, perhaps it was because some people got tired of being so close to their homefolks—as suggested by the *Pioneer*—or maybe because some of the camp cleanups were beginning to run into real money, but anyway the immunity of stagecoaches ended in Deadwood on March 25, 1877. Sam Bass, the balladists' marvel, took part in the proceedings which failed to justify the stories that had been circulated about his skill as a strategist. Present and active were Joel Collins, Jim Berry, Frank Towle and William Reddy. "Front men" for the undertaking were C. Lee and Charlie Barber.

Bass took part in the discussions and was recognized as an expert on procedure, but in the matter of leadership he deferred to Charlie Barber on the ground that Barber was better acquainted with the locality. Barber, however, failed to take over the honors. On the night set for the holdup he shot himself in the foot.

Somebody suggested that Jim Berry take command, and that, too, was all right with Sam Bass. The road agents equipped themselves with a half case of whisky which they carried up Whitewood Creek to a spot about half a mile above the mouth of Gold Run. They sat down to wait and in the course of a couple of hours got very drunk.

The coach, carrying a shipment of currency consigned to local banks, had been delayed by mud and the remnants of snow beyond Cheyenne Crossing. The night began to feel cold, despite the effects of the whisky, and the boys were about ready to go home when around a rocky bend came six white horses with silver trappings gleaming in the moonlight.

"We'll stop 'em here," said Sam Bass. "And we won't kill anybody." The next minute he stepped out into the middle of the road and yelled, "Halt!"

Johnny Slaughter, the driver, was one of the most popular men on the line—and that means he was pretty popular. The stage driver was the idol of his day, like the matador or the baseball hero or the radio crooner of other days and other places. He was brave enough, as he had demonstrated in fights with the Indians, and he was also experienced—and calm. There was no use arguing with an armed thug who had the drop on you. So he leaned back on the lines and yelled, "Whoa!" The coach had actually come to a stop when one of the lead horses shied at Reddy, and Reddy fired a blast from a sawed-off shotgun.

The charge hit Slaughter in the chest and he fell out of the boot dead. The horses bolted—straight down the trail to Deadwood.

Walter Iler, a passenger sitting next to Slaughter, succeeded in disentangling the reins and got control of the team just as they came pounding into Deadwood. It was after midnight but most of the town was up waiting for the coach. It took Sheriff Seth Bullock only a few minutes to organize a posse and fifty or a hundred men rode up to Gold Run. They found nothing but the dead body of Johnny Slaughter.

Seth Bullock's information service had brought him word that Sam Bass and Joel Collins and Frank Towle were in town, getting ready, it was supposed, to commit some sort of robbery. Before morning Bullock found Towle. But the others were missing. Bass and Collins had chased Reddy out of town and out of the gang to punish him for his carelessness in startling the horses. Having started him on his way they decided it might be just as well for them to go too. Towle was turned loose because none of the coach passengers could identify him. He rode after the others toward an inevitable comeuppance.

Johnny Slaughter's home was in Cheyenne. So his body was taken back there in a special coach for burial, and the town turned out in his honor as never before or since. Johnny's funeral was an important civic event not only because he was a great public hero but because his death marked the beginning of a new and fearsome era in this end of the West.

"The hearse," observed the chronicler who marched in the long procession as representative of the *Deadwood Pioneer*, "the hearse was drawn by six of the finest dappled-gray horses that were ever harnessed in the West." What he fails to add is that the six horses were a match for the six that always hauled the coach to its goal in Deadwood in gay plumage and silver trappings. The dappled-grays performed a similar duty at the Cheyenne end of the run.

They were the team of the final relay and they were carrying Johnny Slaughter on his last tragic mile. It seemed apropos.

## CHAPTER 28

### THE TREASURE COACH

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GREEN RIVER, Wyo., Jan. 17, 1879—*Scott Davis, captain of shotgun messengers on the Gilmer Salisbury line, today captured Dunc Blackburn, the stage robber. There was no struggle.*—Press Dispatch to Denver News

THE government couldn't keep the miners out of the Hills in 1876 but it did make one gesture to show concern over its treaty obligations: It kept out the U. S. mail. Mail was brought by official routes to such places as Sidney or Cheyenne where the postmasters shut their eyes and turned it all over to forwarding agents who operated the illegal stage lines into the Indian country. The inference was, of course, that the government hoped nobody would be deceitful enough to put a letter on a stagecoach and that nobody would stoop to read a letter thus delivered.

Out of this situation came the local version of the pony express—the Sidney Short Route and Clarke's Centennial Express to the Black Hills. The genius in charge of all this was Henry T. Clarke to whom entirely too little credit has been given for the advance of comfort, if not culture, into the Hills. Clarke followed Jenney around the Harney Peak district in 1875, charted out a few trails and returned to Sidney to await the inevitable rush. In July 1876 he started the pony express from Sidney running virtually due north to the Cheyenne River thence, skirting the south end of the mountains, to Red Canyon and north to Custer. In a month he was operating a branch service to Rapid City by way of Red Cloud Agency (south and west of the present city of Hot Springs). By fall a considerable work on the improvement of the North Platte River crossing was nearly completed and the Sidney Short Route was beginning to do a good business. All over the West the newspapers carried the glad announcement of a faster and presumably more comfortable ride to the gold fields:

THE BLACK HILLS  
SIDNEY SHORT ROUTE  
TO  
THE BLACK HILLS

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THE NEW 61 SPAN TRUSS BRIDGE OVER THE PLATTE  
RIVER 40 MILES NORTH OF SIDNEY

is now open for travel and  
with the road is

GUARDED BY THE UNITED STATES TROOPS

Only 167 Miles to Custer City  
from the Union Pacific  
Railroad

Wood and water in abundance and The Finest Roads in the World, by this route. All Mail sent in care of H. T. Clarke, Sidney, and Camp Clarke, Platte River bridge, will be forwarded as directed. Sidney is now a good outfitting point. Large supply of Grain, Groceries, Hardware and Produce always on hand. Hotel accommodations good.

TOTAL DISTANCE FROM SIDNEY TO CUSTER CITY 167 MILES. This distance is by the road now traveled between the two agencies. *Dear's* Sidney and Black Hills Stage Line leaves this route at Snake River, running through to Red Cloud Agency in 17 hours and Custer City in 36 hours. The distance by *this* route (via Red Cloud) is 182 miles.

Our forwarding houses can furnish transportation for 250,000 pounds at a shipment. Freight charges from Sidney to Custer City range from 3 to 5 cents per pound. Freight shipped care H. T. Clarke, Sidney, Neb., will be shipped at lowest rates.

Passenger Rates—Omaha to Custer City, 1st Class \$45, 2nd Class \$35, 3rd Class \$25.

Via the Short Route the distance between the railroad and Custer was some fifty miles shorter than that of the Cheyenne Trail—a matter of ten or eleven hours of traveling. The Sidney route followed a course well known to cavalymen traveling out to Fort Robinson or Fort Laramie. But it was made practicable for stagecoaches only through the building of Clarke's bridge across the North Platte. Shallow, wide, er-

ratic, muddy and unpredictable, the river had been the bane of the wagon trains since first the trek to the West began. It might be forded easily—or not at all. In flood it was impassable. In dry season its broad bed was likely to be a mixture of marsh and desert.

So in order to maintain a schedule, Clarke built a bridge—sixty-one spans of it—the biggest engineering feat that part of the country had ever seen. The money was subscribed by Omaha businessmen who foresaw a lot of good markets in the gold country. But the man who talked to them and got them to invest was Clarke.

The mail contract was his principal concern as it was with all the old stagecoach men now fighting for the Black Hills business. Some of his competitors, because of old associations on the overland route, stood well with people high up in the Post Office Department and their lobbies in Washington were loud and active. In the end, Clarke outmaneuvered them all. The only possible excuse the country might offer for sending letter carriers into the Indian country was the business of the army. So Clarke made his deal with the army. Theoretically he wasn't operating a pony express or a stage line at all. He was directing a lot of dispatch riders and government personnel carriers between Fort Sidney, the new Fort Clarke on the Platte, the military detail at Red Cloud (near the present Chadron) Fort Robinson and perhaps Fort Laramie.

For his services Clarke charged ten cents a letter in addition to the three cents demanded by the U. S. Post Office Department for carrying it to the transfer point. Clarke collected his fee by selling a special envelope with his contract in the upper left-hand corner:

In consideration of the ten cents paid for this envelope, and of which payment its possession bears evidence, the undersigned agrees to carry it from the Union Pacific railroad at Sidney, Nebraska, to Custer City and Deadwood, Dakota Territory (and such other places as his route may supply) or from above places to the Union Pacific railroad at Sidney without additional charge. . . . H. T. Clarke.

The Sidney Short line didn't begin complete operation until April 1877, by which time it was compelled to extend service beyond Custer to Deadwood. In the meantime the Cheyenne stages, carrying Wells, Fargo express, were making daily runs up into the northern Hills in spite of the weather or road agents or Indians. Except in the middle of summer this was likely to be a rugged trip.

George V. Ayers, the Deadwood merchant, wrote in his diary of



having arrived in Custer City on March 25, 1876, after having been seventeen days on the road from Cheyenne and in snow ten days of the seventeen. This schedule probably was nothing very unusual in the early spring. To make ten or fifteen miles a day over trails that could hardly be seen and through drifts of soft snow in the canyon bottoms required miraculous skill and the kind of courage that is never demanded of a bus driver.

In addition to hazards of weather and terrain and routine Indian attacks a new menace of the road had to be recognized with the murder of Johnny Slaughter. Toward the end of 1876 robbery was getting to be such a commonplace part of traveling that the editor of the *Deadwood Pioneer* was taking a dim view of its value as news.

One characteristic report read:

The Ft. Pierre stage was held up again last night. The road agents got \$460 from the passengers and \$5,000 in gold dust—the cleanup of the Midas No. 2 Gold Mine.

The law of averages eventually worked for Sam Bass at Round Rock, Texas, July 21, 1878, a little more than a year after Slaughter's death. Dick Ware, the Texas Ranger who finished Bass ("with a forty-five pistol, he done slew poor Sam"), probably had never heard about the Gold Run robbery. Unverifiable reports say that Reddy got a life sentence for a bit of homicide committed early in 1878 in Ohio. Frank Towle was killed by Boone May during a robbery on the night of October 15, 1877, not quite a month after the Bass gang's holdup of the U. P. at Big Springs. Jack Farrell was last seen riding north along the trail near Inyan Kara Mountain down which a group of Sitting Bull's warriors were headed south. Jim Perry was killed by Sheriff Joe Glascock in Mexico, Missouri, his home territory, whither his reputation as a bad-man had preceded him. And as for Joel Collins—well, Doc Peirce who was a deputy sheriff in Custer County in 1877, tells of his fate in some detail:

"The gang always hid out around here. After the U. P. robbery they split up and Sam Bass went south. The others eventually came back here. One day about October 10 or 11, I saw several men trailing a pack pony. They made camp up on the creek, which was all right. But what made me suspicious was that I saw them that same night down below here on the trail to Buffalo Gap traveling in the dark.

"Well, they got out of the Hills and were riding across the prairie when they ran into a lot of cavalry. When the cavalry rode up the troop divided so there was a file on each side of them. Then the captain yelled, 'Halt!' and told them, 'You are our prisoners.' It seems almost as if the soldiers had been looking for these robbers, probably because one of them was Joel Collins. I don't know who the others were and neither does anybody else.

"Somebody, probably Collins, said they were going to fight it out. 'We've sworn never to be taken alive,' he said 'That's ne plus ultra with me,' the captain said. So the soldiers kindly obliged before the holdup men could get their guns out. . . . They found a quarter of the U. P. loot—seventeen thousand dollars in money—in a packet under Collins' saddle. Train robbers and road agents don't seem to be having a very good time of it any more. . . ."

The quick taking off of the Bass gang, however, did not deter other gunmen who thought they might have better success if they profited by his experience. A succession of holdups at a point called Robbers' Roost, near Hat Creek Station, soon made it necessary to equip all stages with armed guards (to whom the Wells, Fargo Company always referred as "shotgun messengers") and as a special precaution all bullion leaving the Hills was shipped in "the treasure coach," a conveyance that looked like any other coach except that the inside was steel-plated. With the gold, as passengers, rode at least two of the crackshots with which Deadwood was so lavishly provided. In addition, it was the custom to have a brace of outriders scouting the country ahead and on the sides as the coach rolled on. The best known of the shotgun messengers in the Black Hills area were Scott Davis, Bill May, Boone May, Jesse Brown, John Cochran, Gail Hill, Billy Sample and a lone wolf named Wyatt Earp.

The toughest of the road agents, if there was any choice, were Duncan Blackburn, John Wall, Lame Bradley, Joe "Kid" Webster, Prescott Web, Tom Hartwell, Jim Carey, Frank McBride, Doug Goodale, Al Speer and Big Nose George. This, of course, is not the complete roster of the local banditti, nor were their depredations along the stage routes confined to a few publicized ventures like the Johnny Slaughter murder, the Canyon Springs fiasco or the battle of Robbers' Roost. Every few days there was a new stage robbery and just about as frequently there was another lynching near one of the settlements.

It is interesting to note that while the names of the principal outlaws

of the period were quite well known to everybody, the small fry received no identity even in death. Frank Hebert, the old tin enthusiast of Custer, told of two tough men who had plagued a saloonkeeper up in Roubaix.

"I was sure they were road agents," he said. "And they proved I was right four days afterward. They tried to hold up the stage down near Four Mile and a posse from Custer hung 'em up to a tree. I don't know who they were." And the amazing part of the proceedings is that nobody took the time to find out.

Wyatt Earp acted as shotgun messenger only once—on the day he went out of the Hills for good. He had come to Deadwood after a term as marshal of Dodge City with the early rush. But, unlike most of his fellow pioneers, he decided that the camp's rewards went most sparingly to the gold miners. He established himself as a firewood merchant and did a fine business until he decided to go back to Kansas.

In June 1877, just as he was about to leave, the spring cleanup of the mines was brought to Wells, Fargo for shipment to Cheyenne. It totaled something around two hundred thousand dollars, the biggest single load of gold ever to be hauled out of the Hills. And the Dunc Blackburn gang, after a series of robberies in which several guards and drivers were shot, had reached the top of its form. John Gray, the express company manager, looked up Earp.

The next day a notice appeared in the *Pioneer*:

#### NOTICE TO BULLION SHIPPERS

The spring cleanup will leave for Cheyenne on the Regular stage at 7 A.M. next Monday. Wyatt Earp of Dodge will ride shotgun.

Earp and the two hundred thousand dollars' worth of bullion reached Cheyenne on schedule. There had been no trouble except down near Canyon Springs he had noticed that eight men were riding along parallel to the trail well out of shotgun range, four on a side, and he had fired at them with a rifle. He spilled one rider by dropping his horse. The other horsemen turned around and went over the hill toward Deadwood.

The Canyon Springs robbery was by no means the bloodiest or the most spectacular of the stage holdups but it has a place in all the histories of the district because it was the only successful raid on the treasure coach.

On September 28, 1878, the coach was carrying a shipment of ingots

that gossip had valued anywhere from twenty thousand to one hundred and forty thousand dollars. Riding shotgun alongside the driver was Gail Hill, a quiet, frail-looking youth from Missouri picked for the job because of his cool courage in an early holdup near Hat Creek and a second between Custer and Red Canyon. Inside the coach were Scott Davis, captain of the guards, and another shotgun messenger, Bill Smith.

At Canyon Springs Station about 2:00 P.M., half an hour before the stage was due to arrive, two horsemen stopped at the barn and asked for a drink. John Miner, the stock tender, who had been sitting with a prospector on the bench outside the door, arose and got a bucketful of water and a dipper. The men didn't display any arms, he said afterward. They looked to him like ranchers until they suddenly drew six-shooters.

Gene Barnett yelled as usual to attract the attention of the station tender when the coach came up to the door. No one answered. The relief team was standing harnessed. Gail Hill leaped down from the box and started toward it, his back to the barn. Three or four shots came from between cracks in the logs. One hit him in the back and plowed through his right lung. Gun in hand he swung about and another shot struck him in the left arm.

Inside the coach, Hugh Campbell, a passenger, took a bullet in the head and rolled out into the road. Bill Smith, struck by a flying splinter, collapsed in panic on the floor. Scott Davis leaped out of the coach on the side farthest from the barn and took cover behind a pine tree a few feet away.

He motioned to Barnett to pull out and Barnett tried to get the horses moving. One of the outlaws dashed out of the barn to head off the maneuver. Davis dropped him with a shot in the abdomen. Another road agent—there seemed to be about five of them—came out through the back of the barn and tried to get on Davis' flank. Hill, dying in the brush by the roadside, saw the man crouching to take aim and shot him dead. It was the last act of his life.

Using Barnett as a shield, Jim Carey, the gang leader, tried to get close enough to Davis to kill him. But rather than shoot Barnett, the guard leaped back into the brush and got away.

Several miles away from Canyon Springs Davis encountered a road patrol—Boone May, Jesse Brown, John Brown and William Taylor—riding up to see what had delayed the coach. May and Jesse Brown went back with Scott Davis to the scene. But they were too late. The strongbox had been broken open and its treasure of bullion and gold dust was gone.

On the next day, William Ward, stage-line superintendent, and Uri Gilette, an old-time frontiersman, picked up the outlaws' track. At a ranch in a pocket in the Hills they found where one of the gang had bought a spring wagon, a team of horses and a set of harness. The trail of the wagon led them back to Canyon Springs. It became obvious that they had then picked up the man Davis had wounded and had followed a rugged road southward across the mountains to Custer, thence to Cheyenne and the prairie south of Rapid City.

Freighters camping along the Pierre Trail told of four men—one of them apparently sick—who had moved west in a spring wagon a few hours before. In the morning the posse found the remains of their camp, including the wagon. But the holdup men had gone on into the blue. By this time, as was the uncanny way of the country, everybody in western Dakota knew the names of the gang—Carey, Doug Goodale and Al Speer—and all the gossips were positive that the wounded man had been Frank McBride. The finding of the empty wagon convinced them that he had failed to survive the trip.

Westbound bullwhackers gave Ward news of a young man traveling with an odd-looking pack on his saddle who had crossed the Missouri a day or two before. The stage-line superintendent pushed on—and on—getting closer and closer to the young man until the trail ended abruptly in Atlantic, Iowa.

Walking aimlessly down the street on the morning of his arrival, Ward happened to glance at a bank window and had a great shock. Right in front of him, a foot and a half from his finger tips lay two gold bricks stamped with the name of the Homestake Mine and scratched with code letters of the shipment stolen at Canyon Springs.

The president of the bank, John Goodale, was pleased to discuss his novel exhibit. His son, Douglas, had just come back from the Black Hills, he said. That was how the bricks came to be in Atlantic which seldom had a chance to see such things. Douglas had owned a gold mine and he had sold it at a time when gold coins were scarce in Deadwood. So he had taken the bricks in part payment. . . .

Ward who had the status of a deputy U. S. marshal, identified himself to the local sheriff and despite the status of the banker's family succeeded in arresting young Goodale and started back with him aboard a Union Pacific train to Cheyenne. Goodale, Senior, and an attorney accompanied the young man to the station now known as Central City, Nebraska. There they said good-by and got off.

A few miles farther on the prisoner asked permission to go to the end of the train, and he got off, too. After about ten minutes Ward discovered his absence and raised an alarm. The train backed up to the station where the elder Goodale and the attorney had alighted. They were still in town but the deputy marshal never found any further trace of Douglas.

The two gold bricks were returned to the Homestake Mine eventually, and that ended the episode. The rest of the loot was never recovered.

Scott Davis was chief of the treasure coach that year and when you piece together the fragments of his history you begin to understand why. He stands out as the most resourceful and the most courageous man the district produced.

A few weeks after the Canyon Springs robbery he was aboard the coach with another shotgun messenger and three soldiers, when the Blackburn gang stepped into the road at Robbers' Roost. The soldiers, who had been asleep, jumped when they heard the command to halt and fled in panic. Davis' assistant heard a rifle bullet go by his ear and followed the soldiers.

Davis alone remained to fight off four men, all firing at him with rifles or pistols. He lay stretched out on the roof of the coach, aiming at flashes in the dark until his own gun jammed. While he was working to make it eject a frozen shell a pistol ball struck him in the hip.

That might well have been a fine opportunity for the outlaws, for the only other man left with the coach was Superintendent Alec Benham of the stage line and he was busy holding the heads of the lead horses to keep the frightened team from running away. But for some reason Messrs. Blackburn, Wall and their aides had had enough. They stopped in the bush long enough to capture and disarm the soldiers and the reluctant guard, then rode off into the Hills empty-handed.

When Davis was able to get into a saddle on December 7, 1878, he announced to the Wells, Fargo agent in Cheyenne that he had decided to eliminate Blackburn.

"Of course," he admitted, "it's men like him that make good paying jobs for men like me. But he's getting to be a nuisance. I'm going to take some time off and get him."

The people of the Cheyenne district thought it was about time because, while Scott Davis was waiting for his wound to heal, Blackburn, Wall and Kid Webster had raided the stage line horse herd and mur-

dered James Cuney, a rancher. They had been last seen at Lance Creek, no great distance from Hat Creek Station, and there Davis went to look for them.

At Fort Laramie he got the aid of a squad of soldiers. But the weather was freezing cold, the snow was blowing and the pace was fast, and they seem to have lacked something of his stamina. When he had traced the outlaws as far as the Sweetwater, he was alone. The weather got worse after he crossed the river. He had come considerably more than halfway across the state. The country was beginning to get more rugged and the gales were virtually continuous.

How he managed to track two horsemen in this wilderness is something that only another frontiersman might understand. But he seems to have been unerring. They had had very nearly a week's start when he left Lance Creek. At South Pass, about two hundred miles from Hat Creek, he was close behind them.

South Pass City in the last days of December 1878 was already as dead as Ophir. South Pass, an important feature of the Oregon Trail (about thirty-five miles south of the present city of Lander) had been the scene of a gold strike in 1867. In 1870 it had four thousand inhabitants, a Main Street half a mile long, and the best school system in the territory. But five years before Scott Davis' arrival the boom had ended abruptly and stampedes had drawn the population to more promising fields. Now, with only five or six unconvinced prospectors wandering around through its ghostly remnants, it afforded plenty of solitude but scarcely any privacy.

Davis found out that, as he had already suspected, his quarry had loitered only briefly in South Pass City and departed.

By this time he was nearly at the end of his tether. The wound in his hip had opened up and every movement of his horse gave him excruciating pain. He was virtually starving, for that end of the territory was a grim, inhospitable land even in summertime and wild game seemed to have deserted it long ago. He was half frozen and very nearly snow-blind, for he had been moving through blizzards with no proper shelter for days on end.

Progress had been slow at the beginning and as he got weaker it became even slower. To keep his feet from freezing he had frequently to alight and lead his horse. On days like that he was lucky to get five miles farther along the trail.

He took shelter for a few hours in South Pass City with an old sourdough, then picked up his saddle preparing to go on to Green River.

As he stumbled at the door of the shack it became evident to him that he might never be able to make it.

"Look," he said to his host, "is there anybody around here who might want to buy a horse?"

"Yes," the prospector told him, "anybody can use a horse. But yours don't look very peart. He's been hard rode."

"I'll sell him to you for the price of a stage ticket to Green River," Davis said and the proposition was grumbly accepted.

It was something over a hundred miles from South Pass to Green River. The stage, pounding along a rough and treacherous road, took nearly twenty-four hours to get there. And when Davis dismounted at the end of the run he discovered that he had come too far. Somewhere back in the Hills, Blackburn and party had abandoned the trail.

He went over to the stage station then and enlisted the help of Charlie Atkins, a driver. From the stage-line superintendent he borrowed another saddle horse and started back north.

"There's only one station along there where I didn't get any information one way or the other," he said. "That's Alkali Springs. So we'll look there."

At midnight the next night they rode over a hill almost on top of Blackburn's camp. The outlaws scattered. Scott opened up with a rifle. Kid Webster, bleeding from a leg wound, was quick enough to mount a horse and escape down the draw. Another, believed to be Hartwell, was shot through the lungs and died before morning. Dunc Blackburn got away in his bare feet. John Wall, wounded three times and unable to move, surrendered.

Leaving Atkins to guard the prisoner and look after fifteen stolen horses tied to a picket line in the camp, Davis got back into the saddle again and wearily followed the broad trail of Blackburn across the snow. The outlaw had stopped about two miles out of camp to undress and tear his underwear into strips. With these rags tied around his feet he had started southward again.

Davis came upon him in a restaurant ravenously devouring his breakfast. His feet were frostbitten, swollen and lacerated. . . . He had walked something like thirty-five miles through the drifts. And that was enough for him. When Davis walked in, he put up his hands without protest.

With virtually no rest Davis, accompanied by Atkins, started back for Cheyenne, taking the prisoners and the stage company's horses with him. The return trip was about as rugged as the one out but they finished in about ten days.



One of those odd frontier juries heard all this when Blackburn and Wall were brought to trial. But the murder charges that hung over the pair seemingly were forgotten. The defendants were found guilty of robbery, however, which was unusual in that vicinity. They were sent to a Federal penitentiary for ten years. But nobody seems to have known or cared what happened to them after they got aboard the eastbound train at Cheyenne—least of all Scott Davis.

The treasure coach was starting that night for Deadwood with a shipment of currency. He climbed aboard.

## CHAPTER 29

### THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY

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LEAD—*A trail of blood leading toward Spearfish Canyon is plain to be seen and the sheriff's men expect to have Doherty under lock and key before nightfall.*

—*Lead Daily Call, October 14, 1888*

THE stage lines continued to furnish most of the district's melodrama for a full decade, even though the Indians had been subdued and the shotgun messengers improved with the years. Clarke sold his Sidney Short line to Gilmer and Salisbury, who had been running coaches out of Cheyenne. But the sale amounted to nothing save a change in management. The original Gilmer-Salisbury line continued to operate out of Cheyenne. The original Clarke Centennial line continued to run into the Hills via Rapid City and the east slope. And no change was made in the Clarke schedules between Sidney and Deadwood via Custer.

The pioneer rush in which the hardy gold seekers furnished their own transportation was finished, now that all the claims in the paying gulches had been staked out. But in its place had come a new rush of speculators, merchants, engineers, educators, investigators, machinists, reformers, actors, faro dealers and dance-hall girls. The people of the second influx had no more in common than those of the first except that they were basically adventurous. They had to be.

Men like Scott Davis made life increasingly precarious for the road agents. But the road agents were adventurous, too. No matter how many of these nuisances found their way into roadside graves, there were always new ones to meet the overworked shotgun messengers on the next trip. Stagecoach travel continued to be exciting and dangerous for the passengers and a state of war without quarter for the drivers and guards.

Wall, Blackburn and Webster were in jail or out of circulation otherwise; Sam Bass had gone back to Texas and all his gang were dead or scattered; two of Jim Carey's gang were dead, the others in hiding (in-

cluding Doug Goodale); Fly Specked Billy had been lynched; Bob Castello, with his name tattooed on his chest so the coroner would make no mistakes, had been shot by young Kid Meyers who didn't want to see his father robbed; something dire had happened to Persimmons Bill Chambers; One-Eyed Ed Patterson had closed the other eye; and Chet Allen, having failed to lift the three-hundred-thousand-dollar cleanup of the northern mines, had died in Pueblo—presumably of chagrin.

But with all of these sprightly characters out of the way, there remained Harry Wisdom, Joe Connors and Prescott Web. Another more or less durable group—for a time—were the Price gang: Tom Price, Archie McLaughlin, Billy Mansfield and Jack Smith. And one should never overlook the narrow-gauge train robbers—Wilson, Doherty and Murphy.

These lads, of course, had their day and vanished. But probably some special attention is due them because they were very nearly the last of their kind. Web, Wisdom and Connors made a quick reputation with the old routine in a familiar locale. They held up the stage at Robbers' Roost. But they contributed some novelty to the proceedings by capturing Boone May. The story goes that he had thrown down his gun when two other guards refused to put up a fight. The road agents collected all the valuables aboard the coach, then, after some debate on whether or not they ought to kill May, decided to let everybody proceed on his way to Deadwood.

Some days later Web and two companions arrived in Deadwood and boldly set up a camp in Sherman Street. May saw them as they turned the corner into Main Street, apparently headed for the Bucket of Blood, and started to follow. Mr. May seems to have been careless for Web suddenly swung about and fired a pistol at him. The shot hit him in the left forearm.

Web, however, did not wait to pursue his advantage, if any. He ran across the street and tried to get aboard somebody else's horse. May hit him with three bullets and nearly killed him before his revolver jammed and he had to work on the cylinder with his disabled left hand. (In those days nobody's gun ever got through a complete fight without balking at a crucial moment.)

Web was badly hurt. But he had five shots left in his revolver, and he fired all of them at May as he rode off. At the corner he fell off the horse, bleeding from the mouth. He surrendered to Captain A. M. Willard and Sheriff Seth Bullock, who then promptly picked up Wisdom and Connors.

There was quite a bit of feeling over this episode, particularly on the part of Boone May, but nobody got around to a lynching. As soon as Web had come back from death's door the trio were taken back to Cheyenne to face trial for the Robbers' Roost holdup.

They were turned loose for lack of evidence, after the custom of the country. But right after that they all chose parts in the greatest anticlimax in the history of stagecoach robbery. Web moved into Custer County, married, raised a fine family and became a county official. Wisdom went from the Cheyenne jail to the office of a freighting outfit and got a job pushing bulls up into the Hills. Connors was more imaginative than the others. He went to work with Gilmer and Salisbury, riding shotgun and chasing banditti.

Jesse Brown in his reminiscences indicates that the Tom Price gang of road agents were among the most persistent if not the most successful on the Hills trails in the late seventies. Hardly a coach went anywhere, he says, without some sort of experience with them.

Toward the end of 1878 they were standing across the road between Jenney's Stockade and the Cheyenne River, collecting toll from virtually every coach that went by. Riders sent after them found nothing. They seemed to have advance information of every trap that was set for them—at any rate they never fell into any. So eventually it was decided to put shotgun messengers not only on Old Ironsides, the treasure coach, but on every vehicle that had to pass through Hat Creek Station. They never attacked a coach thus guarded. But the minute the shotgun riders were taken off they returned to Robbers' Roost in full force.

As might have been expected in a protracted operation such as this, the identities of the gang members were no secret to anybody. Nor did the general resentment against them prevent their paying visits every now and then to Deadwood or Cheyenne. This bit of exhibitionism was what got them in their final trouble.

Archie McLaughlin walked into Wes Travis' livery stable in Deadwood one Sunday morning and found himself looking at Bill May—second of the gun-wise May brothers—who had come to see about buying a horse. May arrested McLaughlin without trouble, and McLaughlin, who apparently liked the sound of his own voice, volunteered the information that Mansfield was in town.

May and Jesse Brown captured Mansfield as he was drinking a glass of milk in the home of a friend in Sherman Street. At the jail the prisoners took part in some more conversation as a result of which **Brown**,

Travis, Bill May and Jim May (youngest of the three) were guided out to a spot near where Englewood is now. The fight was short but decisive, despite the fact that Jack Smith got away in the thick forest. Price was nearly dead when they picked him up. A bullet that hit him in the stomach had come out through the back, close to the spine.

The law in Lawrence County stood still for about a month waiting for Price to die. By all the rules, considering the weird ideas of surgery and infection prevalent in that day and place, he should not have survived the twelve-mile ride on the hay wagon that brought him to town. But he recovered enough to ride the stage down to Cheyenne and go to trial for "robbery with a deadly weapon on a public highway." He served a term of five years in the penitentiary and thereafter is lost to sight.

For some reason never made clear, McLaughlin and Mansfield were kept in jail in Deadwood until some time after the Cheyenne court had finished with Price. Then they were loaded into the coach and taken down to the cell he had just vacated.

By the time they delivered the prisoners in Cheyenne, court had adjourned and they were informed that McLaughlin and Mansfield would have to wait for their trial until the next term—about six months.

Neither Jim May nor Jesse Brown, the accompanying guards, liked the prospect of this delay. They decided, on their own initiative, to take the pair back to Deadwood and get them committed for sundry acts of grand larceny committed in that district.

So once more the cavalcade took the road with Jim May riding beside the driver and Jesse Brown sitting inside with the prisoners. At Fort Laramie they stopped for supper and took off again in the dark. They had just got to the timber a mile from the fort on the approach to the Platte River when the driver heard the familiar command to halt.

He pulled his horses back on their haunches. Brown leaped from the coach squarely into the arms of a man about whom he could furnish no description except that he was a "big fellow." He was disarmed and told to stand alongside May, who had been similarly treated.

There were three armed men in the road, all of them masked. One went to the coach and told McLaughlin and Mansfield to get out. Then the whole party, including the two guards, walked about fifty feet into the woods where the "big fellow" put a noose around Mansfield's neck, threw the other end of the rope over a branch, attached it to a saddle on the back of a white horse, slapped the horse on the rump and said, "Giddap."

Archie McLaughlin tried to deliver some sort of farewell message as

they were adjusting the rope under his chin. But they told him to shut up and quit wasting time. Then the "big fellow" gave the horse another slap on the rump. . . .

"The 'big fellow' told us to keep our mouths shut and mind our own business," Jesse Brown recalled afterward. "He and his friends left our guns in a pile a few feet away. And then they went into the woods. . . ."

One gathers that for a few persons in this region the antics of the Price gang had become very tiresome indeed.

The first railroad in the Black Hills, in case this hasn't been mentioned before, was built in 1881 by the Homestake Mining Company under the somewhat misleading title of Black Hills and Fort Pierre Railroad. It was a narrow-gauge line that started out with five miles of track to Woodville and then moved another five miles to Brownsville on Elk Creek near the Tomahawk Golf Club. This was the little railroad that eventually pushed its way completely through the Hills to a spot near the present site of Piedmont. The traces of it in the little towns it abandoned in the forest, like Roubaix and Nemo, are the most nostalgic relics to be found in the region. But save for its important name it showed no signs of ambition when it arrived in Brownsville.

It carried a few passengers from time to time—passengers who didn't care much about accommodations. But the job for which it had been built was to haul lumber, timber and firewood required by mines in the Lead area. Quite an army of forest workers was kept busy by the rapid growth of mine structures in the neighborhood of Homestake Hill, and it was the custom to pay these men on the twelfth day of the month.

On that day Alexander McKenzie, manager of the Hearst Mercantile Company, would draw the money needed in timber camps along the right of way. He would then travel down to Brownsville on what was known as the "Pay Train." On the basis of this routine, Napoleon Bonaparte Doherty, sometimes known as Jack Doherty, laid the plans for the only train robbery ever staged in the Black Hills. The idea of a man named Napoleon Bonaparte Doherty holding up a train on a ten-mile railroad named Black Hills and Fort Pierre seems somehow to have merit.

Associated with Mr. Doherty in the proceedings were John Telford, a gambler and saloon man, recently of Rapid City; John Wilson, onetime cowboy, currently fugitive from a bench warrant; and another ornately titled character, Alfred Simpson Nickerson, alias Spud Murphy. The party rode down to Woodville on the night of September 11, 1888, and

eliminated one menace that had come into the highway-robbery business, the telephone. They cut all the wires in sight, picketed their horses and sat down to wait.

The train, consisting of a toy locomotive and a string of flatcars to match, was scheduled to leave the Homestake terminal at 7:00 P.M. on September 12. Half an hour later it would pull onto a Y at Woodville. The engine would return to Lead with what freight happened to be on hand. A work train from Brownsville would presently come up and take McKenzie and his flatcars and little black bag the rest of the way.

However, the plan didn't work. The Lead roundhouse crew was late returning from a picnic; the train was an hour late at Woodville; the Brownsville work train was already waiting at the Y for the string of flats; so McKenzie was on his way before the gang could get reoriented.

They tried again a month later. This time McKenzie, suffering from rheumatism, turned over his part of the job to William Remer, Homestake paymaster. Remer sat on the fireman's seat in the engine cab with twelve thousand dollars in currency in a valise in the tool box. Following the old stagecoach custom he carried a sawed-off shotgun across his knees. Richard Anderson, superintendent of the railroad, and H. P. Anderson, who had come along just for the ride, were sitting on some camp supplies on one of the flatcars.

This night the gang had prepared to wreck the train by spreading the rails on the approach to the trestle over Reno Gulch, five miles south of Lead. There might have been a good wreck had not the train stopped to let off a section crew at the top of the approach. The engine had not picked up any speed by the time it hit the soft track. The engineer stopped the train, still on the track, just as Wilson and Doherty jumped out of the bushes and began to shoot.

Remer and the train crew shot back from the protection of the tender and a rocky outcrop beside the spot where the engine had stopped. In the middle of the fight, Remer crawled into the cab, stuck up a broomstick and began to blow meaningless toots on the whistle.

At a camp a mile away the engineer of a logging train heard these blasts with alarm. In those days anything that you couldn't understand meant trouble. He tooted his own whistle and rallied a collection of lumberjacks, all armed, and went to the rescue.

W. W. Sweeney, fireman of this train, discovered a trail near the scene of the holdup and presently came upon Wilson lying on the ground face down. A shotgun pellet had hit him under the eye. An-

other charge of buckshot had gone through his spleen and he was obviously in great agony.

His account of what had happened was a *mélange* of lies, but he did mention that the leader of the gang, whom he called Jones, had been shot in the head. Bloodstains alongside the track corroborated him.

Doherty got away. But Murphy, who had fled on horseback, got lost around Spearfish Canyon and came back through Deadwood after a posse had been formed. He was picked up in Rapid City the next day along with Telford. The pair were tried on December 5 and thanks to the testimony of Wilson for the state were sentenced to the penitentiary for fifteen years. Doherty for whom the Homestake had offered a reward of a thousand dollars dead or alive, was arrested in Douglas by Sheriff John T. Williams of Converse County, Wyoming, on February 6, 1889. The sheriff used the reward to start a sheep ranch and to pay off a gambler who had pointed Doherty out.

Doherty appeared for his arraignment on March 11, 1889, with A. J. Plowman as counsel. The next night he and Wilson made a spectacular jailbreak. With a broken file and a bit of wire they had drilled out the rivets in the frame holding the iron door of their cage. Then, using the door as a battering ram, they had come out through the wall. They escaped on two horses stolen from the sheriff and got to Canada.

Wilson was killed resisting arrest a year later in Whitman County, Washington. Napoleon Bonaparte Doherty in the meantime had established himself in Rossland, British Columbia, as an honest and law-abiding citizen, in which role he continued until he died a natural death. Telford and Murphy served fourteen months of their fifteen-year sentence before they were taken out of the penitentiary on a writ of habeas corpus. A bright attorney argued successfully that the law on which they had been convicted had been defective.

So Telford went to Salt Lake City where he died some years ago, a successful contractor. Spud Murphy, according to last reports, went back home and was rated, withal, a very worthy man.

One of the chief criticisms of the five-cent Western novels of our childhood was their high percentage of murder and mayhem. I recall the puzzled query of my mother—herself a daughter of the frontier—who had been looking over my choice in literature.

"I think the author is a little biased," she said judiciously. "Don't you



suppose that in his part of the country the stagecoach got through once in a while without a lot of villainy and robbery and bloodshed?"

Well, it probably did, in the nickel-novel writers' part of the country as well as in the Black Hills. One of the undying legends of Deadwood concerns William "Phatty" Thomas—spelled as you see it—whose heart was touched by the lonesome state of the dance-hall girls in the dives of lower Main Street. This was in 1876 when everything must have looked pretty confused to a simple stage driver.

Phatty went back to Cheyenne, resigned his job and became a shot-gun freighter, which is to say a freighter who worked rapidly "and alone" to supply articles on which mining-camp stores had run short. He had a well-built spring wagon and six good mules and with the aid of the small boys of Cheyenne he quickly got a cargo.

"I need cats," he told the first little boy. "I need lots of cats. And I'll pay two bits apiece for them—any size, any sex, any condition. . . . I'm loading at the Elephant Corral."

That night Cheyenne was virtually catless and Phatty was on his way to Deadwood with about fifty yowling passengers. He had fitted a commodious crate into the wagon box so the cats had room to move about. Aside from one or two that had been clawed up in personal fights, they were all in good condition when he came to the end of his journey down below Number Ten in Main Street.

And it turned out that he had made a good guess about the camp's current need. He had scarcely tied up his mules when the bedizened lovelies were beating a path to his theoretical door. With little squeals of ecstatic delight they discovered that the rumors were true. A modern Dick Whittington—Deadwood Dick Whittington—had brought these beautiful creatures all the way to lower Main Street from someplace else. And was he going to sell them? Making more noise than the beautiful creatures in the crate, they fought their way to Phatty's side and Phatty admitted that perhaps he might be induced to sell.

Ten dollars was the minimum price for a cat of any size in any condition. Strictly on a basis of poundage a big cat ought to bring more. So some fine specimens went for as much as thirty dollars. Phatty had about a thousand dollars when the sale had ended after an hour of intensified bargaining and he had also a lot of pleased customers—or so they say in Deadwood where one historical source is quite as reliable as another.

# CHAPTER 30

## DEAD ON ARRIVAL

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*BUFFALO GAP—Guards, including Boone May, failed today to save the life of Lame Johnny Donahue from a lynching mob between here and Battle Creek.*

*—Dispatch to Rapid City Journal*

ONE of the exhibits in the Adams Museum is the headstone which, for a time at least, marked the resting place of one Curly Grimes. In 1880 he was widely discussed about Lead and Deadwood as a gunman, which seems to have been somewhat gratuitous inasmuch as he probably never had a gun. The bones of Curly Grimes are scattered now and nobody knows who he was or anything much about him except that he is dead. His headstone is worth a place among the museum's exhibits merely because it shows the growth of a healthy critical attitude on the part of the local populace toward some of their better-established heroes.

The card identifying it reads:

This stone served for some years as a marker for the grave of Curly Grimes on the Bulldog Ranch near Sturgis. Grimes was killed by W. H. Llewellyn and Boone May, law officers, who were tried for his murder in the Federal district court. According to their story, they arrested Grimes because they thought he might have robbed a post office and they killed him because they believed he was trying to escape from their custody.

It is quite plain that the directors of the museum have heard all about Boone May and like the Greeks who slaughtered Aristides have become weary of hearing him called just.

There were three May brothers in the northern Hills, all of whom came to Deadwood Gulch in 1876, all of whom were gunmen and all of whom got jobs of one sort or another protecting the lives and property of the pioneers. Technically the three were about evenly matched,

quick on the draw and accurate. But as a killer Boone soon rolled up the most impressive score. His rivals declared, not without some justification, that he made his own opportunities.

When the stage lines out of Cheyenne began to operate on a regular schedule in the middle of 1876—bringing in prospectors and hauling out gold—they soon employed what they called shotgun messengers. Shotgun messengers were just what you'd take them to be, armed guards. They were called messengers because they represented and were paid by the Wells, Fargo Express Company. Boone May began to "ride shotgun" almost at once and his life became filled with trouble.

His connection with the stagecoach company apparently took up only a portion of his time. It may be that he was employed only when exceptionally heavy shipments of bullion were being taken out of the Hills. At any rate he seems to have got around the district on and off of stagecoaches almost at will. Had it not been for his abundant leisure he could hardly have hired himself out as an assistant to Llewellyn in the case of Curly Grimes.

Llewellyn, a deputy U. S. marshal, had been sent out from Washington, D. C., to round up a gang who had raided a post office on the Sidney Stage Route near the Nebraska line. The marshal, a stranger to the prairie country in which he had been asked to operate, knew that he could never find his way around without help. He rode up to Deadwood and made an arrangement with May. The pair got down to the White River along in November. There were signs of an approaching blizzard and need for haste.

The details of their search have not been preserved to us. Somebody near the scene of the robbery gave information that one Curly Grimes might know something about it. A hunter well acquainted with the country told them where he thought they would be able to find Grimes. So they caught up with their quarry without undue delay, told him he was under arrest, disarmed him, put him aboard a horse and started back to the court of jurisdiction, which was in Deadwood. By the time they got to Horsehead Station, south of Buffalo Gap, the weather had turned bitterly cold. Before they left Rapid City the following night the snow was coming in with a gale behind it. They had hoped to reach Fort Meade as the next stop. But by midafternoon they were beginning to freeze.

What happened after that time is revealed only in the testimony of Llewellyn and May at their trial. The story goes like this: Grimes complained that the iron manacles were literally freezing his hands,

and asked that they be taken off. Llewellyn, who had the key, unshackled the prisoner, warning him as he did so against any attempt to get away. Grimes promised that he would give no trouble.

The trio then started out again along the Sturgis-Tilford Road and stopped at the Bulldog Ranch, below Sturgis, for supper. After leaving the ranch they began to angle toward Fort Meade and presently came to a spot on the military reservation where thick woods came close to the road. Grimes stuck his spurs into his horse and made a dash for the shrubbery. One of his captors shouted, "Halt!" And when he didn't halt, the other one shot.

The testimony was that Llewellyn, about whose authority in the case there could be no possible argument, had killed the prisoner. May, according to this account of the proceedings, had been present at a shooting in which he took no active part. And a lot of people doubted that just as a lot doubted that Grimes had actually been trying to get away.

The pair made sure that Grimes was dead, then rode on to Fort Meade. A burial party went out, dug a grave for the victim and put a stone marker over it. At post headquarters Llewellyn and May stood respectfully while the commandant informed them that they were under arrest for murder. Had they killed Grimes in Tilford or Sturgis, it would have been a matter of no interest to the army. But unfortunately for everybody concerned, they had come inside the reservation to keep their prisoner from escaping, and because of that they would have to be tried in a Federal court.

So they were tried in the spring of 1880 and acquitted because nobody could prove that they weren't telling the exact truth. The shotgun messenger declared that he'd had enough of the Federal service and went back to the stagecoach business. Llewellyn continued to serve as a marshal until a few months later when an assistant disclosed his plan to kill another prisoner trying to escape. Meanwhile Lame Johnny Donahue had met Boone May and presently had been hanged.

Of all the strange characters who cluttered up the early history of the Black Hills Lame Johnny has always seemed to me to be the one most resembling a human being. And that is undoubtedly because there still are people alive in Custer, Rapid City, Buffalo Gap and elsewhere who actually knew him, some who saw him every day for a year or more.

John A. Boland, secretary of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Association for almost twenty years, was acquainted with Lame Johnny during most of his boyhood, although looking back on the mat-

ter he thinks it probable that he never laid eyes on him. When members of his family talked of this highly unpopular road agent they weren't talking about anybody they'd read about in a book. He was as real to them as, say, the drivers on the Sidney stage line—more real than blood relatives who lived across the state line, and nearer to them. And in time he was real, also, to the boy who listened to the legends about him.

Lame Johnny has been gone from us just about seventy years. But you don't realize that when you talk to some of the folks who lived in his shadow. When John Boland speaks of him you feel that he is a living, breathing person standing this minute at Horsehead Relay Station waiting for the coach to the northern Hills. . . . "He knew he was going to die. He told my uncle so. . . . It wasn't premonition, it was common sense.

"He wasn't with the gang that held up that stage. He had nothing to do with the man that died in my uncle's bed. We all felt that—I mean my people did. He said he was going to get killed. My uncle got the idea that maybe he was right about it. . . . My mother cooked the last meal he ever ate. She was all upset when they took him away."

Lame Johnny was christened Cornelius Donahue along about 1850 in Philadelphia. As a child he suffered a leg injury in a fall from a horse and went through life with a noticeable limp.

He was graduated from Stephen Girard College, Philadelphia, then left home to work on a ranch in Texas.

He seems to have been born to trouble. The day he arrived the ranch was in an uproar. The Apaches had made a raid the night before and stolen fifty horses. This he learned was a common occurrence and apparently proof against ordinary precautions and protections. In the end the cowboys decided that the only way to keep their horses would be to steal them back from the Indians. So Cornelius Donahue became an expert horse thief.

He came to the Black Hills with the gold rush, identifying himself as John A. Hurley. He was appointed deputy sheriff in 1877 and made a reputation as an efficient peace officer. Early in 1878 he got a job as bookkeeper in the office of the Homestake Mining Company. He was living a quiet unimaginative life when, one day, an old associate from Texas came to visit him and broadcast the story of his career as a horse thief. Lame Johnny quit his job and disappeared.

In the fall of 1878 the Sidney stage was held up near Buffalo Gap. One of the robbers was shot. Ed Cook, superintendent of the division, was lined up with the other passengers and recognized or thought he



Deadwood Phidias carves monument to Preacher Smith.



recognized Johnny among the holdup men. All Gilmer and Salisbury stage employees were warned to be on the lookout for him and a Federal grand jury considered his case in Deadwood.

For one reason or another Johnny kept out of sight. Occasional reports or rather rumors came to Custer and Rapid City that he was hiding out near Pine Ridge Reservation, "running off" Indian horses with his customary skill. Captain Frank Smith, a Cheyenne stock detective, was sent over to the White River country to look for him. . . .

George C. Boland, uncle of the Rushmore secretary, came to Rapid City in 1876. When the Gilmer and Salisbury Company moved their stage terminus from Cheyenne to Sidney and took a route up along the east slope of the Hills, George Boland got a contract to maintain two relay stations, one at Buffalo Gap and one at Horsehead, a spot on the Cheyenne River about five miles south of where the Hot Springs Airport is now.

There wasn't much at Horsehead except a horse barn with accommodations for the wrangler and a cabin to accommodate Boland on his frequent visits of inspection. The cabin had two rooms, one for sleeping quarters, the other serving as a combination trading post, warehouse and kitchen. Horsehead was not a regular meal stop but was always equipped to provide food for the passengers in case anything happened to disrupt the schedule.

One day in October 1878, Station Agent Boland came down from Rapid to find the wrangler seriously ill. He wrote a letter to his brother, Abram C. Boland, whom he knew to be in Buffalo Gap, asking that a relief be sent down. He sent the letter and the wrangler north on the first stage and took over the work of the station himself.

"He'd been there about two days," John Boland relates, "when, one noon, a wagon drove up to the cabin. There were two tough-looking characters in the front seat—or maybe my Uncle George just thought later that they had looked tough. They probably only looked glum, the way pretty nearly everybody did in those days.

"One of the men said they'd like to get something to eat and Uncle George said he thought he could find something for them. And then they mentioned casually that they had a friend with them in the box of the wagon. The friend was in trouble, they said. So Uncle George looked into the wagon and saw they were right. There was a man lying on the floor and he'd been bleeding all over the place.

"'He got shot,' the driver said. And he asked if there wasn't some place to lay him down where he might be more comfortable. My uncle



said there was a cot in the cabin. The men carried their friend in and laid him on the bunk. But Uncle George saw that he wasn't worried about comfort or anything else. He was hardly breathing.

"The men said he'd been shot the day before in an Indian fight down near White River and that sounded reasonable except that Uncle George had heard the fight occurred three days before that. He cooked up some dinner for them and they ate it. There wasn't much more conversation.

"After they'd eaten, the men drove away, leaving their wounded friend in Uncle George's bunk. They were going to round up some other pals, they said, and they'd be back to pick him up later.

"At four o'clock the man died. It was a hot June day. Uncle George waited till nightfall and buried him down near the corral."

The date of this strange adventure is a little uncertain but it seems to have occurred within a couple of days of the Buffalo Gap stage holdup.

Boland, tired out by a strenuous day, was sleeping soundly about midnight when he was brought suddenly to his feet by the sound of distant hoofbeats. Somebody was coming up from the south at a lope.

Boland methodically collected a shotgun, a Sharp's rifle and a supply of ammunition and went outside to take up a station in the barricade formed by the crossing of the logs that made up the end wall and the south side wall of the cabin. By that time the hoofbeats were plainer and he could see a moving figure in the moonlight. There seemed to be only one man, but that didn't mean anything if the Indians were going to visit him. . . . There'd be plenty of others crawling up the draws along Horsehead Creek. He rested his rifle on a log and drew a bead on the approaching rider. He'd be able to get one, anyway.

And then, of a sudden, he heard a snatch of song—"Oh, Paddy Dear, an' did you hear . . ."

"Well, I wouldn't say that's an Indian," he said. And he took his guns back into the house. The horseman, who turned out to be Lame Johnny, was still singing as he dismounted at the door. He had come, he said, to pick up a little flour and some beans.

"My uncle had known him for a long time," John Boland said. "Johnny had done a lot of ranging around that end of the prairie when he was a Custer County peace officer and afterward when nobody knows what he was. Uncle George saw him every couple of weeks, which was almost constantly for a couple of men out in a lonesome waste like that. A sort of friendship had grown up between them.

"I suppose that my uncle knew Lame Johnny better probably than anybody else in the Dakota Territory. And he always said afterward

that Johnny was no stage robber. . . . Maybe he was stealing horses from the Indians but a lot of people in those days looked on that as a sort of technical crime and nothing to murder a man for. Anyway, Uncle George used to say, 'If you have to hang a man, hang him for something he's done, not for something you'd like to think he might have done.'

Johnny stayed for the night at the Horsehead cabin and left after breakfast in the morning. Looking back on the incident George Boland couldn't remember a single thing he had done or said that might show any connection between him and the dead man and his friends. He showed some interest in Boland's story of the affair but no concern.

"They probably shot the boy themselves in some sort of row about nothing," he observed. And that seemed as plausible an explanation as any. He boarded his horse and rode off to the south. He was whistling "The Battle of the Boyne Water" and, as George Boland remembered it, "You wouldn't think he had a care or an enemy in the world."

A week later Captain Smith ran across Lame Johnny on Pine Ridge and arrested him. Meantime a new wrangler had taken over the work at Horsehead and Boland had moved back to Buffalo Gap.

"My mother was keeping house for Uncle George at the time," John Boland recalls. "For a while she cooked meals for the stage passengers who stopped at their station. One morning the coach Old Ironsides rolled up with Jesse Brown riding shotgun and inside, manacled, was Lame Johnny.

"She didn't notice him at first but when one passenger didn't get out for breakfast she went over to see why. She brought him his breakfast—the last meal he was ever going to see—and prevailed on Captain Smith to take off his irons long enough for him to eat it. Then Johnny asked to see my uncle George.

"'They're not going to take me to Deadwood,' he said. 'They're going to get rid of me. . . . Look at the escort they're sending with me.' My uncle looked around and saw Jesse Brown and Frank Smith and Boone May. He went over to the guards and asked them to do right.

"'I'm not saying anything about Lame Johnny one way or another,' he told them. 'But he's wanted by the United States court and he has a right to a fair trial, and it's the job of you fellows to see that he gets there—alive.'

"Johnny thanked my mother for his breakfast as they got ready to pull out. . . . She knew what was going to happen to him. She could sense it just as he did. And Uncle George wasn't putting any confidence in the effect of his speech either."

Jesse Brown, the shotgun messenger, wrote later of the trip north. Captain Smith was on the front seat with the driver, he says. He himself was on horseback at the side of the coach nearest the prisoner. Johnny nervously called his attention to a horseman about a quarter of a mile away to the west who was galloping on a course parallel to that of the stage.

"I think that's Boone May," Johnny said to him. And Brown confirmed his suspicion. It was Boone May. He presently went out of sight behind a rise. At that time, one gathers, he was going about twice as fast as the coach.

Brown was unaware of impending trouble until they reached the little rill now called Lame Johnny Creek, about four miles north of Buffalo Gap, where a masked man stepped out of the brush and ordered them to halt. Brown, who had fallen behind the coach, started to leave the road and was suddenly ordered back by a voice from the creekbed. His wife and daughters who had been riding inside came running to him screaming. So he stood trying to calm them at a point where it was impossible to see the coach because of a dip in the terrain.

There was some shooting. After a while Smith came back and asked to borrow Brown's saddle horse to do some reconnoitering. Brown complied and took his family back to the stage. The prisoner was gone. The driver reported that the masked man had shot him and then dragged him out of the coach. Lame Johnny in his last conscious moments was still clinging frantically to the seat, the driver said.

The coach went on. Brown found his horse at Battle Creek Station (near the present Hermosa) on his next trip south two days later. He never saw Smith again.

The day after the shooting and kidnaping of Johnny a northbound bull train in charge of Pete Oslund crossed the creek a little west of the stagecoach trail. Oslund was riding ahead of the procession and so he was the first to see the body hanging from a tree.

Oslund and his bullwhackers buried Lame Johnny at the foot of the tree and put a marker over him. Like Grimes he was later dug up presumably by somebody who wanted to find out if he had really been shot and if so what kind of bullet had killed him.

Jesse Brown to the day of his death seemed convinced that a considerable lynching party had taken part in the execution. But even to him some details of the case were puzzling. How anybody could have known that Lame Johnny was coming north on that particular coach was something he could never explain. Smith by some magic or other might

have got word to somebody on Pine Ridge—but to ride all over Pine Ridge and round up a mounted posse would take a couple of days. Whoever warned him to get back to the road must have been somebody who knew that out of Buffalo Gap he had been on horseback behind the coach and not in his usual place beside the driver. . . . And he never could explain that either.

The suggestion that there might have been only one man in the lynching mob was, of course, preposterous.

LAW OF AVERAGES

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DEADWOOD—*Seth Bullock is in receipt of a letter from Boone May who says he likes it fine in South America but longs to see Deadwood again even if it is too peaceful to be any fun. . . . Good luck, Boone.*

—Social Note in *Pioneer-Times*

BOONE MAY was a fatalist, which, considering his temper and tendencies, was a very good idea. For a man who went around a gold camp asking for trouble he lived a surprisingly long time. He had the courage, not to say impudence, of the gunmen of his generation and, if he lacked something of Wild Bill Hickok's skill, he had better luck.

In a way he seems to have been fairly well liked, probably because he didn't butcher any of the homefolks and never did a bit of harm except to people who were expendable anyhow. In his own community he had a reputation for unfailing geniality which may have been due, in part, to the fact that his neighbors never did or said anything that might possibly make him cross. So far as any mention of the matter in his presence was concerned, Lame Johnny Donahue might never have existed. Apparently everybody in the northern Hills felt that Boone knew more about it than any of the local gossips could tell him. Silence was still golden in his presence when in the fall of 1880 he took another characteristic leave of absence and went hunting with H. O. Alexander, Frank Howard and Fred and A. M. Willard on the plains near Stoneville (now Alzada, Montana).

He seems to have been a pretty good shot because he was credited with the killing of twenty-three buffalo in one day. His total score was probably enormous. The party stayed out all that winter.

On a trip to Stoneville for supplies, Captain A. M. Willard got news that a large body of Indians had come around the southern end of the Hills from Pine Ridge and were moving to wipe out all hunters they

might find between the Little Missouri and the Yellowstone. This area was still Indian country and forbidden to white men.

The whites, warned by Fred Willard, were mobilized by the time the Indians arrived and their show of force was enough to convince the chiefs. They held a parley and agreed to stay off Indian territory. The Indians, to avoid a fight which they saw they could not win, agreed to move on to another hunting ground.

When the Sioux had gone away the Deadwood party decided to forget the agreement and moved onto the reservation, pitching camp near the spot now occupied by Meadow, South Dakota. They were preparing to pack up and start for home toward the end of February when their camp dog announced the arrival of the avenging Indians.

Boone May got to his feet but before he could take cover he found himself facing a warrior with a rifle. The Indian fired and the bullet screeched by May's ear. The muzzle was so close that he could feel the heat of the blast. He pulled his own trigger. Nothing happened. A shell was jammed in the breech. He got his pistol out just as the warrior fired again and missed. May blew his head off.

It was a short fight, but vicious. All the hunting party's horses—except two led to cover by Fred Willard—were killed. When the Indians abandoned the raid, they left six men dead. One wounded brave lay near the fire. Boone May casually killed him with a knife.

The symposium after the departure of the Indians was led for the most part by May, who had some new evidence in support of his favorite theory.

"When your time's up it's up," he argued with Fred Willard. "Look at the hole I was in with that Indian. My gun is jammed and he fires two shots at me—almost in my face. Now what do you call that?"

"Damned bad shootin'," answered Willard.

Sam Bass (as you may recall) for a time led a band of stage robbers consisting of his personal factotum Joel Collins, Jim Berry, Frank Towle and Jack Farrell. This was the gang that held up an inbound Cheyenne stage at the mouth of Gold Run and shot and killed Johnny Slaughter, the driver.

Towle, held for a time in Deadwood, was later in the Union Pacific train robbery at Big Springs, Wyoming, the first affair of its kind west of the Mississippi. But once more he escaped and, probably just to keep his hand in, returned to the Black Hills.

He picked the wrong time for it because on the day when he and his

bad companions were lying in ambush at Robbers' Roost near Hat Creek Station on the Cheyenne stage line, Boone May was riding north with the passenger coach as a guard.

The usual masked man stepped out of a cleft in the rock alongside the road and commanded a halt. Boone May and John Zimmerman, riding horseback in the darkness about a hundred yards behind, heard the challenge, dismounted and crept forward.

The gang leader who seemed to have had some experience in such business questioned the driver about possible outriders. The driver admitted that two were coming along some distance behind. The robber then ordered two men to go back and murder the guards. One of the pair was Frank Towle.

The ambushers were ambushed before they had proceeded more than a hundred feet. Zimmerman shot at the man on his side of the trail and missed. May put a bullet squarely through Towle's head. The rest of the gang, panic-stricken at this unexpected opposition, got to their horses and fled.

Thus far, of course, this episode is merely one of an almost featureless series and might not be worth mentioning save for one bit of melodrama of the sort in which the leading actor was always the redoubtable Boone May.

The guards escorted the passengers safely to Hat Creek Station, the end of their run. May, who had got a good look at his victim in the moonlight, mentioned that he had killed Frank Towle and learned for the first time that Towle had been rated as an important and valuable outlaw. Because of his participation in the Union Pacific robbery a reward of five thousand dollars for his capture dead or alive had been posted in Cheyenne.

"But of course you shouldn't have killed him," the station agent observed. "It's about a hundred and fifty miles from here to Cheyenne and that's a hell of a long way to haul a corpse."

"Nonsense," answered Boone May heartily. "You don't have to haul a complete corpse—a hundred and fifty pounds at ten cents a pound would cost too much anyway." So, with no further ado, he went back to the scene of the holdup, removed Towle's gold stickpin and cut off his head. The head, wrapped in a burlap sack, was expressed to Cheyenne aboard the next southbound stage.

They say it was a stirring sight when he walked into the Federal building in Cheyenne and rolled the head onto the marshal's desk. "I bagged Frank Towle myself," he reported. "And I'll take the reward."

The marshal who didn't seem very shocked looked at him with an odd glint.

"The reward was withdrawn a month ago," he said evenly. "And now you can get this thing out of here. A burial permit's going to cost you five dollars and I'm warning you, boy, you'd better have it. . . ."

One of May's wide-eyed historians mentions that, soon after the killing of Towle, he and Billy Sample, another stalwart of the stage lines, "captured" a spy named Joe "Mex" Minuse. One of them got the idea that Minuse, who did odd jobs around Deadwood saloons, was relaying information about ore shipments, important passengers, routes and security measures. So they took their suspect out into the hills and "interviewed" him—which is to say they put a rope around his neck and every now and then hoisted him up to a tree limb. It is mentioned in the chronicle that both of them were masked which, considering their technique, seems like an elementary precaution.

Every time they hoisted Joe they would ask him about his connections with the stage-robbing gangs: who paid him, who were the leaders, where were they hiding out? Either Joe didn't know or he didn't mind being hanged, for he didn't tell them anything.

The difference between this procedure and whatever it was that happened to Lame Johnny was demonstrated after about half an hour. The frequently hanged Joe Minuse began to show signs of wear. His eyes were bulging; he was speaking in a whisper. He couldn't answer the questions had he wanted to, and it was beginning to look as if he couldn't hear them either.

At that point with commendable thoughtfulness they untied the rope from his neck.

"You can go now," May told him. "But don't think we're through with you. Some of these days we'll come after you again, and we'll try to help you to remember a little better. . . ."

In the middle of his talk, Sample lifted his hat to scratch his head and his mask fell off.

Joe Minuse's voice came back to him in a hurry. "Sample!" he croaked. "Well I know you now, you free-milling son of a bitch. And I know just where to get you taken care of."

Sample was momentarily at a loss for words. . . . But not Boone May. "Mex," he said. "You know just a little too much."

Then he shot Joe Minuse, and killed him instantly, for he was a good shot. Nobody would have known the details if May and Sample had



kept their own counsel. But, after all, Boone May was never the one to withhold the details of his killings from his friends. That was part of his charm.

May was one of the few people in the Hills who wasn't waving his hat when the first railroad train came in.

"There's the end of the stage business," he stated somewhat obviously. And less intelligibly he added, "And that's the end of all our work to maintain law and order in the Hills."

When his listeners thought that over they could make out something of what he meant: You upheld law and order by killing stage robbers and people you accused of stage robbery. But there wouldn't be any stage robbers when there weren't any stages to rob and . . .

Well, Boone May couldn't stand what he called the new civilization. Outwardly the North Western line and the Burlington meant nothing much except that you could get to Omaha overnight and you didn't have to wait four or five days for a Chicago newspaper. But the Boone Mays sensed the coming of barbed-wire fences, parking meters, hat-check girls, antigambling acts, saloon closing hours, stoplights, gun-toting ordinances and other modern conveniences. They mightn't have foreseen the exact outline or the immediate application of these devices. But they understood the essence. . . .

So Boone wrapped his six-shooters in an oily rag and went down to Bolivia. He sent back a few letters announcing his perfect happiness. He was up in a good old-fashioned mining district where men were men and there was a lot of business for a good law enforcer. They were just like the people he'd known all his life, he said, except that they spoke Spanish. But he didn't mind that.

Deadwood heard along about 1895 that he had shot an army officer in a quarrel over a woman and that the authorities in whom he had placed so much confidence were taking it all in very bad humor. Boone May went up into the mountains and lived with the Indians until the affair had blown over. Infrequent letters came down to the seacoast and back to the United States from this hide-out, asking questions that were never going to be answered, commenting in detail that the Bolivian Indians didn't understand Spanish any better than the Sioux Indians so that anybody who couldn't talk to a Sioux would get along fine with these Indians because he couldn't talk to them either.

Apparently it took a long time for the army officer's friends and relatives to forget. At any rate it was years after the shooting before Boone

said good-by to his Indian friends up in the mountains. Most of his old cronies had died or moved out of the Hills when word came that he was on the move again and looking for a new gold camp.

After nearly another year he wrote from Brazil. He was staying temporarily in Rio, he said. It was too bad he had to stick in a city because there was a place back in the hinterlands that a mining engineer had been telling him about where you could pan not only gold but diamonds. . . . And the riffraff of the world was pouring in there so fast that any good gun fighter could get a job no matter how old he was. . . . The reason he didn't go at once to this great bonanza was yellow fever.

"It's bad," he wrote. "And I think maybe I got it."

Then began a silence that has lasted ever since. Seth Bullock made a comment on it about a year before his death.

"The fever murdered him while trying to escape," he said.

## CHAPTER 32

### HONEST INJUN! HOPE TO DIE!

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FORT LINCOLN, July 29, 1881—*Sitting Bull and his band surrendered on July 19 to the United States Army. The chief was taken downriver as a prisoner of war. He was defiant. He refused to believe that his people would be well treated by the United States. "White men," he said insolently, "have made many promises. They have never kept one. . . ."*

—Press Dispatch to *Rapid City Journal*

THE Black Hills communities had been given legal status by the Great White Father in Washington. There was a new order in which murder was, theoretically, murder. There were jurymen and a judge and a recognized court to make the people aware of this development. And this was the unfortunate time chosen by Kangi Shunka—which is to say "Crow Dog"—to assassinate Spotted Tail (Sinta Gleska) the high chief of the Brule Sioux.

U. S. Circuit Judge Granville G. Bennett, sitting in Deadwood, heard of this sad affair within twenty-four hours because the electric telegraph had been working for some months now between Pine Ridge Reservation and Fort Meade. But he didn't understand it any more than if it had been a message sent to him in a cleft stick.

"I don't think I ever heard before of an Indian chief being removed by means of open assassination," he said to U. S. Marshal Raymond.

"The Indians are progressing in the white man's ways," observed the marshal. "This Crow Dog seems to have been chief of the Indian Mounted Police at Rosebud Agency with a good record. On the other hand I get from some of the old scouts around here that Spotted Tail has been going around making himself unpopular for quite a while."

"What does an Indian chief do to get himself murdered in public?" inquired the judge. "We'll have to try Crow Dog, of course, but I'd like to know what we're trying him for."

"I'm going down there and find out about him myself," replied the marshal. "I ought to be back here in a couple of weeks."

But it was a lot longer than that before he appeared once more in Judge Bennett's office. He looked tired which was understandable, but he also seemed nervous and puzzled.

"Well," the judge inquired. "What's behind all this?"

Marshal Raymond looked as if he had intended to laugh but had forgotten the joke.

"I'll tell you," he said, "you just won't believe it. I've got Crow Dog down in the cooler and you can ask him yourself if you want to. But he swears back and forth that he shot Spotted Tail with a long-barreled thirty-eight to protect the honor of his home."

"His what?" demanded the judge.

"Maybe I should have said his teepee," replied Marshal Raymond. "The point of it is that he killed Spotted Tail when he discovered that the old chief was trying to steal his wife."

"This is going to raise some interesting points of law," commented Judge Bennett. Then the marshal left to put a report of the conversation into his diary. . . .

Crow Dog, in his blue uniform and brass buttons, was a person of some importance among the Brule Sioux. But in the eyes of the United States until the time of the shooting he wasn't so big a man as old Spotted Tail. Spotted Tail was not only chief but, despite rumors of his local unpopularity, he was credited with having extraordinary influence with other leaders of the Sioux Nation.

He had been called to Washington to speak with the Great White Father. And he had called a meeting of the wise men of his tribe to discuss the message that he would deliver. As witnesses for the prosecution told the story in court he was on his way back to his own teepee after the adjournment of the meeting when he saw Crow Dog and his wife coming toward him in a wagon. According to this version, Crow Dog got out of the wagon, stooped over, straightened up and fired at the chief. Spotted Tail fell off his horse, got to his feet and moved a few steps toward Crow Dog, trying meanwhile to draw a pistol. Then he fell dead.

If the whites on the agency figured that this was the signal for a coup, they couldn't have been more wrong. Whatever might have been the influence of the old chief, nobody seemed to miss him much. Such of his friends as had met with him in the council apparently figured that

the murder wasn't worth the trouble of any reprisal. Crow Dog was arrested by the Indian police and taken to Fort Niobrara because, under the terms of the treaty of 1868, he wasn't allowed to kill anybody on the reservation. So presently the white man's government agents, including the marshal from Deadwood, arrived at Rosebud to make an investigation.

It was then that the chief outlined his unusual defense. "He had been a bad man," Crow Dog declared simply. "He thought all the women of the Brules belonged to him. But my wife did not belong to him. I told him that. He came to my lodge. I was not there. He asked my wife to come with him to his village. She would not go. He said he would come next day with his braves and take her with him by force. . . . So I came home. I heard what was going on. So I took my pistol. . . . So I killed him."

It was a convincing recital, especially in view of the fact that Spotted Tail certainly had been killed in the presence of Crow Dog's wife. But there were other recitals. The investigators began to find even more convincing evidence linking the murder to politics rather than love. They heard tales of an alliance between Black Crow and Crow Dog to eliminate Spotted Tail because he was not a hereditary chieftain but a maverick promoted from the ranks for bravery in battle. Crow Dog, said the bearer of this information, felt that he had a good chance to succeed Spotted Tail as chief.

So there was nothing for it. Marshal Raymond took him to Deadwood and put him in jail. A grand jury charged him with murder and he was brought to trial in the U. S. district court at the March term, 1882. For the first time in history an Indian was appearing in a white man's court, before a white jury, to answer for the killing of another Indian.

Attorney A. J. Plowman, appointed by the court to defend Crow Dog, took up his work with skill and enthusiasm and noise. His client who could understand only about one tenth of what was going on was pleased at the turmoil and promptly named him Wi-cas-a-Ci-Qua-La-Ho-Tonka—"Little Man With the Big Voice."

Plowman, probably dubious about convincing a white jury that love and jealousy had been added to the red man's other troubles, contented himself with a technical argument that was well thought out but no more convincing.

He pointed out that, according to evidence obtained by the government's investigators, Crow Dog had followed all the tribal amenities

in his killing. After Spotted Tail lay dead he took immediate steps to expiate his crime. He surrendered to his own people and came before the council and told what he had done. The Brule chiefs decided that he had done wrong in killing Spotted Tail and that he would have to be punished for it. He was ordered to deliver to Spotted Tail's relatives a specified number of horses and blankets, plus fifty dollars of the white man's money with which it was possible to get other things at the Rosebud Agency. Crow Dog carried out the order.

This, Plowman argued, constituted legal atonement for his crime and that furthermore the government had no jurisdiction inasmuch as it had given the Sioux the status of a separate nation in making a treaty with them and that Crow Dog, having been tried under the laws of his own nation, could not properly be tried again under the laws of another. His motion for a directed verdict was overruled. He went through the rest of the case as best he could and made a ringing speech to the jury at the close.

The jury went out and hesitated only a few minutes before bringing in a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree. Judge Bennett imposed the only sentence possible.

Plowman entered the usual motions after the trial and got the hanging postponed for a couple of months. Crow Dog showed no sign of resentment. Marshal Raymond, who had felt sorry for him all along, gave him the run of the jail yard which, being unfenced was virtually a public park. Crow Dog made friends with the children who began to spend all their free time in his company. They were obviously quite attached to him although they couldn't speak a word of his language and he knew practically nothing of theirs.

Then one day the attorney came before Judge Bennett with an incredible plea.

"Your Honor," he said. "Before I start upon the request I am about to make, I wish to call Your Honor's attention to the unusual circumstances of this case. My client is an Indian, the first Indian to be tried in one of our courts for the killing of one of his own people on an Indian reservation. And because this case has been without precedent I ask Your Honor's consideration in another matter for which there is no precedent. My client understands that he will be hanged on the first day of September, a month from today. And he is reconciled to death. But he is an Indian and he is terrified at the thought of going into the hereafter without having performed the duties required of him by tribal tradition.

"He requests, Your Honor, that he be allowed to return to the reservation so that he may say good-by properly to his friends and distribute his property among his relations. When he has done this, he assures me, he will come back here, surrender himself to the marshal and go quietly to his hanging."

The judge blinked.

"As you say, it's unusual," he declared. "But there isn't much about this case that looks commonplace. If you will vouch for this man—if you will give me your personal guarantee to have him here in time for his execution—I shall assign him to your custody and you can let him go to Rosebud if you want to. . . ."

So it was done. Crow Dog walked out into the street where a friend stood waiting with a horse.

At the reservation he turned in the uniform he had worn as chief of police. It had once belonged to an artillery officer and he had been very proud of it. The white trader to whom he entrusted it seemed astonished.

"You're not going to wear it again?" he asked. "You're not going to stay here? You're going back again and let them hang you?"

"I am going back," said Crow Dog. "The judge knows I am going to be back."

After that he went out to divide his few wordly possessions among his relatives. On the following day word of his arrival had gone abroad and friends from all over the reservation came to sit and smoke a pipe with him and wish him good luck on his journey. This unhurried and seemingly endless ceremonial had been going most of the afternoon when William Wilson, a deputy U. S. marshal, came riding into the village. Crow Dog, in anger, demanded why. It was difficult for Wilson to explain.

It appears that someone in the U. S. courthouse in Deadwood had begun to get nervous about the Indian's return and, at the request of someone who had forgotten that Plowman was his legal custodian, Marshal Raymond had sent the deputy to look for him.

"I'll not go back with you," Crow Dog declared flatly. "I will be there when I said I would be there, ready to die. But I will not be brought back." Wilson agreed and went away.

On the following morning Crow Dog started west with his last remaining possessions, his wife on the seat of the wagon beside him.

"It is better you should come," he said to her. "When I have died you will bring me back here and bury me with my people."

They reached Deadwood on August 24 and Crow Dog reported to the marshal. His wife put up her teepee on the hillside near the old cemetery and the next day and the day after that came to talk with him in the jail yard. On August 27 he was called into court. Everybody in town seemed to have received advance notice of what was going on—everybody but Crow Dog. Attorney Plowman was there and behind him in close-packed rows sat the elite of Deadwood.

"I congratulate you on the safe return of your client," the judge told Mr. Plowman. Then he turned to Crow Dog.

"You are a man of your word—a man of honor," he said slowly through the interpreter. "And it is a great pleasure to the court to read to you this ruling received from the Supreme Court of the United States:

"The first district court of Dakota is without jurisdiction to find or try an indictment for murder committed by one Indian upon another in the Indian country, and a conviction and sentence upon such indictment are void and imprisonment thereon is illegal.'"

He laid the document on his desk and looked once more at Crow Dog. "The defendant is discharged," he said.

Crow Dog, suddenly understanding, turned about and kissed Attorney Plowman.

"You damn heap good man," he said. "I come back here some more and die?"

"You go home. You stay," said the attorney.

So Crow Dog went back to Rosebud. He was a stout lance for Sitting Bull in the final uprisings of the Sioux. . . . But somehow that isn't the thing one remembers about him.



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## INFORMATION PIECE VI

### *Sturgis and Piedmont*

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STURGIS was laid out as a townsite speculation by Major H. M. Lazelle (in command at Fort Meade) and associates as soon as the location of the post had been decided upon. It was named in honor of Colonel Sturgis who was also interested in lot sales.

As might have been expected in a town designed to support itself on an army pay roll, it speedily became one of the roughest towns in the Black Hills. It was filled with saloons, gambling joints and cribs. And so skillful were a large percentage of its citizens in taking money away from the troopers that everybody in the vicinity called it "Scooptown" . . . "I went there and I got scooped," a cavalryman of that day would comment, just as a soldier of a later day might complain to an M. P.: "I went in there and I got rolled."

One of the town's most interesting characters was Poker Alice, who smoked cigars and was listed in the census as a professional gambler. She was probably the only female faro dealer the Black Hills ever knew. Calamity Jane was also around the neighborhood in the early eighties but apparently did nothing worth a notation in either the county history or the police records.

A few homicides and outbreaks of public indignation gave Sturgis a place in the news until the quiet nineties set in. Alex Fiddler, a local bum, who must have been especially no good to be recognized as such in that community, robbed a traveler named Theodore Schraum. Early in the morning after his

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arrest a body of masked men took him from the custody of a deputy sheriff named Dan McMillan and hanged him to a tree thereafter called Fiddler's Tree—over there near the viaduct where the Boulder Canyon Road goes under the C. & N. W. tracks. A sign still identifies the spot as Fiddler's Tree, which is sometimes confused with Fiddler's Green, although the two have little or nothing in common.

Some of the graybeards still remember the day when Dr. H. P. Lynch was murdered and a contingent of the Twenty-Fifth U. S. Infantry ran amok. The doctor, called to care for a girl who had been badly beaten up by her paramour, Corporal Ross Hallon, told her to have him arrested. The corporal, resenting what he took to be an intrusion into his private affairs, shot the doctor.

The murderer was arrested by a deputy sheriff and shortly thereafter taken out of jail and hanged to Fiddler's Tree. It was said that some detached personnel of the Seventh Cavalry might have had something to do with it. Later that night a mob of the dead man's friends started out of the post on the road to Sturgis. They were met by a detail of the Seventh Cavalry and chased home.

A week later they eluded a guard at Fort Meade and came roaring into Main Street to shoot up the town. Once more the Seventh Cavalry rode in at the gallop and the rioters scattered. One man was killed but he turned out to be a civilian who had stuck his head out of a window in Abe Hill's Dance Hall.

The coming of the railroad was probably the greatest single influence in the reformation of Sturgis. Once a connection with the outer world had been established the town found itself a distributing center for a large agricultural area. And in growing prosperity the populace began to frown on many things that had previously been considered good business.

Sturgis at the close of World War II was prosperous enough to stand even an important assault on the local income with-

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out blinking. The valedictory of Fort Meade as a cavalry post was received amidst floods of tears, perhaps, but with no worries for the future.

So far as the physical aspect of the town was concerned the only real loss was in the changed policy of what had been one of the greatest grocery stores in the world. It was one of the few places in the United States where you wouldn't cause a riot if you went in and asked for canned durian or mangoes (in season) or a cut of smoked yak. For cavalry officers travel everywhere and when they come home they bring a lot of queer tastes. It is impossible to say now where they have gone or where an eager traveler can buy a durian.

Piedmont, midway between Sturgis and Rapid City, came into existence officially with the arrival of the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad (the North Western) in 1888. Before that it had been Spring Valley Ranch a stop of importance on the Sidney Stage Route. It was also a railroad station on the Black Hills and Fort Pierre line, the Homestake Mining Company's narrow gauge that followed Whitewood Creek, Bear Butte Creek and Elk Creek Canyon down from Lead. This road, whose principal purpose was to haul lumber to the mine, was in existence from 1881 until around 1910. Until fairly recently its mileage markers and whistle posts were an incongruous feature of the road to Crystal Cave.

There are numerous caves in the neighborhood of Piedmont, all of them of the crystalline variety. The first made known to the public was Crystal Cave, discovered in 1890 and widely publicized by the stalactites and stalagmites taken from it for exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. It was not opened as a paid attraction, however, until many years later.

Its sparkling incrustations are still worth seeing but what really compensates for a ride up a tortuous mountain road is the view of Elk Creek Canyon one gets from the top of the little rise at the cave entrance. Ahead of you is the amazing

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pinnacle of Knife Blade Rock afloat in nothingness. Below you is a green oblivion. There is no more majestic nor more unexpected sight in the Hills. Somebody has said that "this is the Grand Canyon with trees in it," and, allowing for certain differences in size, that description is close enough.

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# CHAPTER 33

## MIRACLE PLAY

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*SPEARFISH—The Black Hills Passion Play at Spearfish is getting to be second only to the historic carvings on Mount Rushmore in tourist interest.*

*The Passion play, with Josef Meier as the Christus, is closing its best season in the Black Hills, Sunday night. . . . In the mounting tourist traffic in South Dakota the Black Hills Passion Play at Spearfish is proving to be a very considerable factor. Spearfish is on the way to being the Oberammergau of America. . . ."*

—Editorial in the *Rapid City Journal*,  
September 10, 1948

SPEARFISH, like all the other towns in the Black Hills, has plenty of novel attractions and astonishing history. But that isn't what the natives talk about. No matter how you start a discussion or with whom or about what, it won't be five minutes before you hear all about 1942, the most wonderful, not to say incredible, year the northern Hills had ever known. For that was the year in which *Variety* magazine found out that the Black Hills Passion Play, of Spearfish, rated as the second box-office attraction of the year. (The first, although that has nothing at all to do with this discussion, had been *Hellzapoppin*.)

The story is as odd as any that have sprung from this fabulous countryside.

Josef Meier, a citizen of Lünen, Westphalia, in 1932 was granted a vision. He had heard a speech by one Adolf Hitler which made it clear to him that the Nazis were getting stronger in Germany and that presently they would set about the re-creation of a pagan world. This was clear to Josef Meier of Lünen. He had heard the leader of the National Socialists sneer at the old Christian moralities as something threatening the life of a virile Germany. Perhaps he hadn't put it just that way but

the intonation had been plain and Josef had a quick ear. There was also a lot of nonsense in circulation these days about regimented education with hoodlum politicians telling the professors what they could teach. Goethe University in Frankfurt had been closed by the rector because of pressure brought against the order of the school by students wearing Nazi uniforms. There was grave unrest in other colleges. . . . There was reason for unrest everywhere.

There had been a National Socialist meeting last night. The Leader had been there with his cheer leader and his clique:

"What is Adolf Hitler to us?" . . . "A faith!"

"What else?" . . . "A last hope!"

"What else?" . . . "*Our Leader!*" This last response was punctuated by a blast of trumpets. So Josef Meier, looking across all this, saw a world that was presently going to be in a terrible mess.

Looking back from this point of vantage one might think that it took no gift of second sight to have a vision like that. But in point of fact Mr. Meier wasn't bothered by any stampede out of Germany when he boarded a ship at Hamburg that year. The rush was all the other way—the rush of American economists and sociologists and tourists to take a look at the New Germany. The New Germany! Josef Meier had already seen enough of it.

Meier was a religious man in a religious community. For hundreds of years the proudest work in Lünen had been the presentation of the annual Passion play. Hundreds of years before the monks of the Cappenberg Monastery had written and directed this play. The choirmaster of the monastery had composed the incidental music. And a cast of villagers had performed the great drama with a sincerity and fervor that made it a thing of devotion.

Josef Meier had a deep attachment for Lünen's Passion play. Its history was touchingly beautiful as a reflection of the town's simple, unyielding faith. As drama it came close to the ultimate sublimity. . . . It had become increasingly obvious that pretty soon all these lovely observances of rural Germany would be abolished. There would shortly be no Passion play at Oberammergau, no revival of medieval mysteries at Göttingen—no Passion play at Lünen.

Josef Meier played the Christus in the great drama. For seven generations, now, one after another of his family had been acting in that principal role. He went to visit the other members of the cast most of whom held their parts as a heritage. He told them of his fears and suggested that the time had come to leave Germany and they agreed. Ten

of them accompanied him to the United States and landed in one of the darkest years of the depression.

None of them brought with him anything but hope. At customs they asked Meier what valuables he was carrying in his attaché case.

"I have here the script and musical score of the Lünen Passion play," he said. And the inspector marked the item "no value" on his declaration sheet.

The actors from Lünen went over a difficult course between 1932 and 1938. People were beginning to believe that only an act of Providence could help the country out of its economic morass—so perhaps a religious play fared better during those six years than secular drama. But it's an academic discussion because only a small percentage of the people had money to pay for theater tickets no matter what was offered. The prospects for the future of the Lünen Passion play had become very dim when in July 1938 the little troupe arrived at the Spearfish Teachers' College theater for a routine performance.

The play by this time had been trimmed down to bare essentials. The scenery was battered. The actors had every reason to be tired. The extras had been recruited from the children of Spearfish and they were green and giddy. So Meier was probably hoping that he could get through the night without anything worse happening to him than a riot when the curtain went up. . . . Then presently he was on the stage and something sparked. For lack of better explanation you can say it was hypnotism but anyway all at once the stage was filled with Mansfields and Bernhardtts and the audience sat like dead people for two hours and a half. And when the curtain went down finally there wasn't a hint of applause except that everybody went out virtually on tiptoe.

Josef Meier was too good and too well experienced an actor not to know that the company had just finished the finest performance it had ever given, the finest it was ever likely to give. Out in the wings Pontius Pilate was mumbling to himself and he wasn't under any illusions either.

"Why couldn't we have done something like this when the scouts were looking at us in New York?" he wanted to know. "Why do we have to look like a perpetual mob scene in Chicago and then act like an all-star cast out of *Who's Who in America* in—what's the name of this place?—Spearfish! Spearfish, South Dakota?" Nobody answered him.

Josef Meier was in his dressing room taking off the grease paint when Guy Bell came in. Spearfish may have had citizens with quicker reflexes than those of Mr. Bell, but they appear in none of the published records.

"We need some sort of tourist attraction for this town that won't look

shoddy alongside anything anybody else has to show. I think your play is just what we've been looking for. . . . Now is there any sort of proposition we could make that might interest you?"

Josef Meier considered awhile. "I have been thinking," he said after a little, "that it is time the Lünen Passion play had a new permanent home. We shall never, of course, take it back to Germany."

"Do you like the Black Hills?"

"They are beautiful."

"All right then! Suppose we build you an amphitheater out here on the edge of town and get in some stage carpenters from Chicago to put up a good big permanent stage and . . ."

So Josef Meier and his players sat down and made Spearfish their home. And when the work on the amphitheater was finished they played night after night—seven nights a week—year after year, until in 1942 the results became worthy of national comment.

There were still many worries—enough to break the heart of any director less able to adapt himself to circumstances. As in the classic performance at the Teachers' College theater the supernumeraries were all Spearfish people, mostly boys and girls, and their appearance at the stage door on any given night was largely a matter of their own decision. Meier never knew an hour before curtaintime whether he was going to have a large mobilization of Roman legionaries or only a corporal's guard, a strong and resonant chorus or the piping of a few tone-deaf teen-agers.

The music which consisted basically of an organist and a double quartet was furnished by a local church and it was quite good. More particularly it was dependable. But the play went on in the open air every night regardless of weather and in an octet one or two sore throats were a serious consideration.

But somehow the great tragedy was enacted each night as if it were on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House with a full complement of spear carriers and mobsters, drums, voices, woodwinds and brasses.

I first saw the Spearfish Passion play exactly one week before Hitler concluded his nonaggression pact with Russia. The air was frosty as it sometimes gets in the Hills on a night in mid-August. The sky had been cloudy all day and in the middle of the trial scene the rain came with a stiff wind behind it. In the courtyard of Pilate's palace the howling mob was getting wet to the hide—as was the audience. The Roman cavalry leaned convincingly against the gale and a flood of water from the hill began to sluice around the governor's doorstep.

The tempo of the play never changed. In some spot presumably pro-



tected from the wet the organist went on with the solemn accompaniment. One or two voices joined in a chant. It was thin music. Even with the help of the public-address system it was barely audible against the wind. Down from the dais before Pilate came the Christus while the mob yelled, "Crucify Him!" loudly enough to raise an echo in the hills behind the amphitheater.

All of this, as you huddled in the deluge and shielded your eyes to look at it, had by this time become something totally unreal. The veil of the rain under the big spotlights gave it a ghostly, intangible quality—unearthly and beyond the scope of one's imagination. And yet it was the most convincing drama I have ever seen. This ghastly injustice might not be taking place in my world. But it was certainly taking place someplace else, in some other world—the world we were looking at . . .

The Christus shouldered his cross and began to stagger up the muddy road to Golgotha and presently there were three pathetically white and frail-looking figures hanging to three crosses on a hillock that the dim, wet light made seem far away— Then suddenly the stage went black. The amphitheater lights went on. And there an audience of about five hundred people were standing up absolutely motionless looking into blind night with the rain beating into their eyes. . . . In a moment they stirred, as I did, like people who had been asleep. And everybody filed slowly out.

I have tried since to recall other actors and other plays that had such an effect on an unpicked audience. In my memory, there aren't any.

Josef Meier and his wife, who plays Mary, went on with the play through the war years until 1942 when the curtailment of travel kept audiences out of the Hills. They came back in 1948 and received a welcome not only from Spearfish but from virtually every town in the tourist zone. Members of service clubs and social groups from communities within a radius of sixty miles have solved one of their problems by volunteering for duty as supernumeraries and choristers.

The name of the play is now "The Black Hills Passion Play," a change that seems justified.

# CHAPTER 34

## DREAM IN MARBLE HALLS

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HOT SPRINGS—*There seems to be little of Newport society left in Newport these days. . . . It is all moving by the most direct route to Hot Springs, South Dakota. . . .*

—*The Tatler*, June 5, 1892

EXCEPT for Wind Cave National Park with the triple attraction of a cave unlike any of the others, a herd of obliging wild buffalo and some ballet-dancing antelope, the nonstop travelers on their way through the Hills to Yellowstone or Thief River Falls might possibly never see Hot Springs. And that is a great pity because probably no other town in the Hills has so many interesting wares to offer the tourist.

As a spa, Hot Springs has a history older, perhaps, than that of any other community in the Hills. For this was one portion of Paha-Sapa, the sacred mountains, into which the Indians were not afraid to venture. Here they brought their sick and here tottered aged Sioux Ponce de Leóns looking for the secret of eternal youth. The ailing, particularly the rheumatic, did very well with the waters and went away to become great advertisers for the cure. It is interesting, however, that the Sioux never let a word about the miraculous fountains along Fall River reach the advancing white men. It occurred to them that the lure of health might attract the unwelcome paleface even more strongly than gold.

Down through the Hills in the summer of 1879 came Walter P. Jenney, the geologist, and W. J. Thornby, then a young reporter for the *Deadwood Pioneer*, on a prospecting trip. For several days they made their headquarters at Buffalo Gap, then merely a stage station on the Sidney-Deadwood line. Daily they worked into the Hills toward what is now identified as Battle Mountain and so arrived one afternoon in a canyon through which coursed a river of hot water. Dr. Jenney moved on upstream. Thornby, looking about for a source of the hot water, discovered the three springs of the Minnekahta group. He located a

ranch claim along the creek embracing the present site of the Evans Hotel and a half mile of land upstream.

Mr. Thornby (he was later Colonel Thornby) cut logs to build a cabin and establish himself around the present lobby of the First National Bank of the Black Hills. He had just established priority rights to the spot on which one day would grow one of the most prosperous towns in South Dakota. But he couldn't see into the future any farther than most people. He had mining interests up around Custer that seemed more important at the time. So he gave the claim to a couple of squaw men named John Davidson and Joe Laravic and went away.

It was probably just as well for him. The Indians weren't on the war-path that year but they were, nevertheless, very jealous of their bathing privileges. Before he decided to go back north Thornby had seen groups of them coming over the hills to boil themselves in the springs. (One of their primitive bathtubs, hollowed out of rock is still displayed at the Minnekahta baths.) He had kept out of sight until they had gone away, unwilling, as he remarked years later in the Deadwood assay office, to get scalped as the climax of an aboriginal bathroom comedy.

Not until the end of the Indian wars more than a decade later did the palefaces learn what store the Lakotahs set by the healing fountains of Fall River. Battle Mountain they called the great mass of rock towering a thousand feet to the east of the town. And the name was no accident. For more than half a century the Sioux and Cheyennes had waged a war to the death in this area, reaching a climax with the complete defeat of the Cheyennes on the mountain itself. The prize at stake in this appalling slaughter was a monopoly on the warm springs. One gathers that the Sioux felt very deeply on the subject.

Thornby wrote for the *Pioneer* the story of his discovery of the springs and of the obvious use made of them by ailing Indians. As a result Dr. H. B. Jennings and Dr. A. S. Stewart made a long trip down from Deadwood to Fall River to find out if the water "might have any medicinal or analgesic value." They decided that it had, returned promptly to Deadwood and organized a townsite company. Associated with them were Fred T. Evans, bull-train operator and a pioneer transportation magnate, Judge E. G. Dudley, and L. R. Graves, president of the First National Bank of Deadwood.

The promoters moved immediately to the springs, bought out Laravic and Davidson and platted their town. It quickly became a favorite watering place with the residents of the Hills, who didn't have much choice in vacation spots or health resorts. But three factors combined

to bring it a period of remarkable prosperity and a national reputation: the wisdom and driving energy of its organizers, the coming of the railroads and the liberal divorce laws presently passed by the new state of South Dakota.

The five men who formed the townsite company literally built a city. Fred Evans had piled up great wealth with his endless procession of ox teams between Fort Pierre and the Black Hills. Before that he had made a fortune in the Sioux City Streetcar Company. He had foresight, a frontiersman's nerve and plenty of capital. The Evans Hotel, still an impressive old pile after fifty-odd years, was not the only monument he left when he died in 1902.

The doctors convinced the government that this was a good place for a military hospital and the state of South Dakota that it was an ideal situation for an old soldiers' home. They started a steady hieira to the springs that has never stopped. Hospitals moved in, and more hotels. The streets got paved and the town filled up with hackmen and an extra-large carriage trade. By that time the Indians' bathroom had become a new Carlsbad and no mistake.

Not everybody comes to a watering place to take the waters. The hot comfort of Minnekahta might lure the arthritics but it offered little attraction to vacationers or the bored old gentlemen who apparently came to town just to sit on the Evans Hotel's front porch. A casino on a scale more lavish than any attained by the Deadwood joints might have helped a bit. But nobody bothered to find out.

There were some compensations given Hot Springs for its lack of some of the attractions of, say, Baden-Baden or Vittel. South Dakota's quickstep divorce law went into effect and dissatisfied mates all over the country began to hear about it and the Black Hills at the same time. You had to stay somewhere while establishing residence, and this Hot Springs was very well spoken of as a spa. The best people went there, even if they did move out again after six weeks. And the waters were said to be good, too—although that didn't matter. . . . The main thing was that Hot Springs had more and better hotel accommodations than any other place in the state.

They had private cars on the railroad siding in those days. And toward the end of the era an automobile came down Main Street with a charivari of its own making. Somebody had brought it in aboard a personally conducted baggage car.

The old Newport society was what you saw strolling under the elms in those days—some of it trying to get rid of rheumatism, some of it

trying to get rid of so-called helpmeets, more just experiencing the thrill of being there and enjoying the air.

All of this ended, of course, when the law was repealed. A few of the old customers out of the social register came back for a while after that. But in the end they got into their private cars and rattled away to Reno or some spot where the atmosphere might be less salubrious but was likely to be more interesting.

It may be that Hot Springs' reputation as a divorce mill endorsed by the F. F. V., the D. A. R. and the Newport telephone book has given tourists an erroneous notion of what sort of place it really is. The therapeutic value of its waters has been discussed so often in print that a tripper might expect it to be something like a super field-dressing station—and there's no fun in a hospital. Actually Hot Springs is as free from the smell of carbolic acid and iodoform as any other spot in the Hills. And it is in the middle of a vast assortment of interesting things.

Part of the history of this region's seldom-mentioned whoopee period can be read almost anyplace where a trickle of water exudes from beneath a rock on a hillside or a wisp of steam bubbles up from the bottom of a rill. Millionaires and diamond-busted dowagers are pleasant people to have around in many businesses and the old Hot Springs Boosters' Club undoubtedly made some discreet noises to attract the attention of these pleasant creatures. But nobody inside the corporate limits ever indulged in such magnificent ballyhoo as that of Johnny-Come-Latelys spreading red velvet carpet in front of every barnyard where the well water tasted funny.

Sometimes they were just foolish. They got no attention. They got no customers and after a while they didn't have any money and, as always happens to people without money in a resort area, they disappeared. Some were oversmart. And on the final tally they had no money either.

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On the list of attractions in the neighborhood of Hot Springs you will see an intriguing reference to Cascade Geyser—follow Highway 87 twelve miles south. There is a slight error in this if you think of a geyser as a sort of periodic waterspout like Old Faithful. We had been under the impression that there were no such things as geysers in the Black Hills, even in a place where the rivers are almost hot enough to cook fish. So we went down to see the Cascade exhibit and, lo, it was a cold spring bubbling up languidly out of a pipe under a pavilion.

It is possible that once when the attractions hereabout were being catalogued the water came down to this spot through some crack in the mountains with enough pressure behind it to lift it five or six feet in the air. That wouldn't have been a geyser either but it would have been close enough to satisfy the promoters who set out to tell the world about this odd valley.

It is pleasant here. You have come over a hill and you drop rapidly into a lush green valley walled on the left by red cliffs streaked with a species of local marble. To the right is a mass of trees and shrubbery with a rolling ridge beyond. A circle on the map indicates that the town (or village or community) of Cascade is just around the next corner. You wonder if anything about Cascade will be as incongruous as its nonspouting geyser. You turn the corner but it takes you some time to realize the answer.

At the left of the road stand three store buildings made of stone. Two of them are lofty; all are broad and at first glance new-looking. On the right, you notice presently a number of pieces of sandstone wall rising out of the shrubs. About the same time you become aware that the store windows are boarded up, the front doors fastened with rusty padlocks. There is no one on the straight road ahead. The air about you is so still that you can hear the trickling of water far back against the cliffs.

You turn off into a side road because a signpost says that a lumber outfit is at work somewhere over the ridge. You find the portable mill and get out to talk with the foreman, a graybeard whose age is somewhere about seventy and you ask him about the phenomenon of the deserted town.

"Don't know what happened to it," he observes. "Don't know how it got here. . . . Lived up around Custer most of my life and I never heard of it. It was all before my time."

His younger assistants are no better informed.

"It's just another ghost town," one of them says. "This country's full of them."

You drive back to the highway and take another look. Cascade is a ghost town, all right, but not like other ghost towns— not dustily dead like Cambria, not half-alive like Rochford. And it was obviously a well-built, permanent town in the first place. The ruined walls seem more sinister as you drive away.

There isn't much help in Hot Springs. Nearly everybody you meet has been down to look at Cascade—"now that they've fixed up Number

87." But nobody knows much about it. "I used to figure it was a collection of speak-easies," mentions the girl at the hotel newsstand. "But it's too old for that."

The youngster filling in temporarily at the library knows that there is such a place as Cascade and that it is out of business. She, too, has been there but to people of her generation it is just a few old store buildings "closed up by the sheriff or somebody."

She locates some reference books. There is no mention of this odd place in the *South Dakota Guide* or in any of the works of early Black Hills historians. A bare sentence or two express what Doane Robinson, state historian, thought of its importance. None of the numerous souvenir and anniversary picture books issued off and on by nearly every town in the state makes any mention of it. You are just about to give up the search when the regular librarian returns from her luncheon.

"Cascade? Oh, yes." She smiles reminiscently. "An interesting old place."

"Old?" You mention that it doesn't look old. As you bring it back quietly shimmering in the noonday sun it seems to have the marks of a wreck that never sailed—a real-estate promotion, perhaps, that died in litigation before it got started.

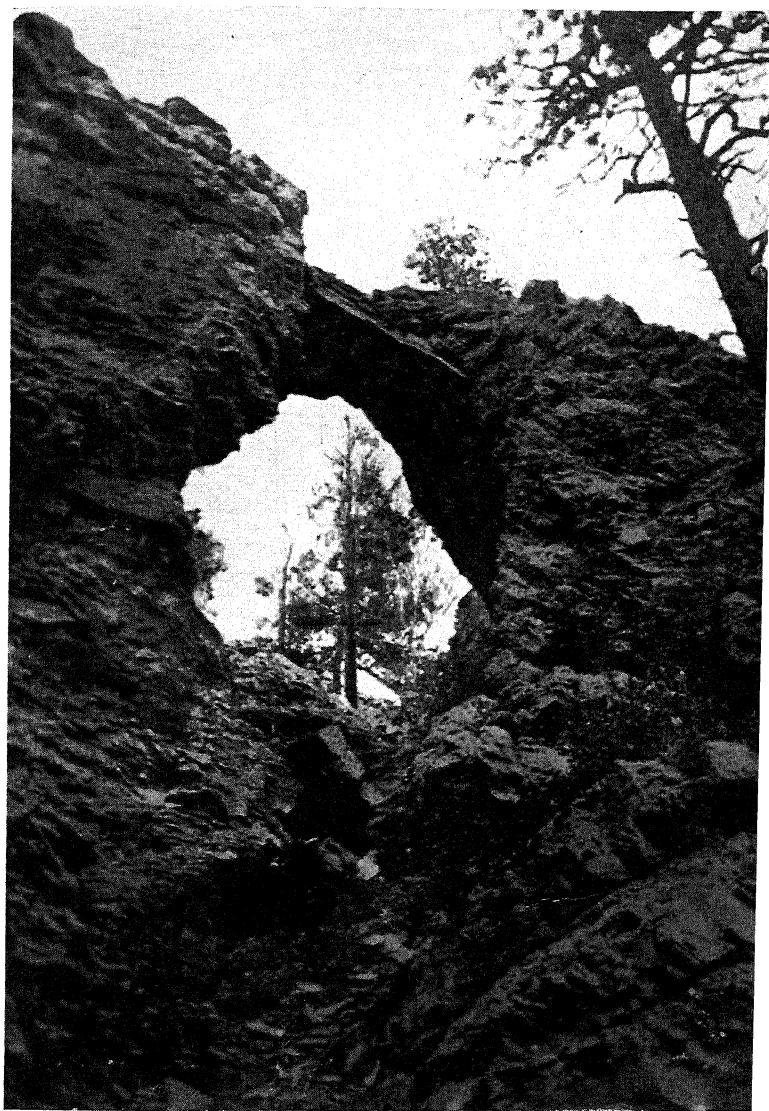
But the librarian shakes her head. "It came into existence about the same time as Hot Springs," she says. "And while it was going it was really an important town. . . . Cascade Springs, they called it then. Here is the only picture of it I have." And she displays an old-fashioned stereoscopic view—a faded card with two faded pictures on it. Despite the dimness of the image you suddenly see the façade of a hotel. And what a hotel! A massive structure something like the Evans. . . . Four stories high and girt about with shady balconies.

You look at a notation on the back of the ancient solio print: "Cascade Hotel—100 rooms, all modern conveniences." The picture shows it to have been about a block long—certainly an impressive structure for a wide place in the road near a nonplaying geyser!

"At the time it was the finest building ever put up in this end of the world," the librarian goes on. "The floors and wainscoting in the halls were marble. The lobby was finished in marble, hardwood and bronze. The furnishings were the finest that ever came this side of the Missouri River—and every stick of them had to be hauled in by oxcart."

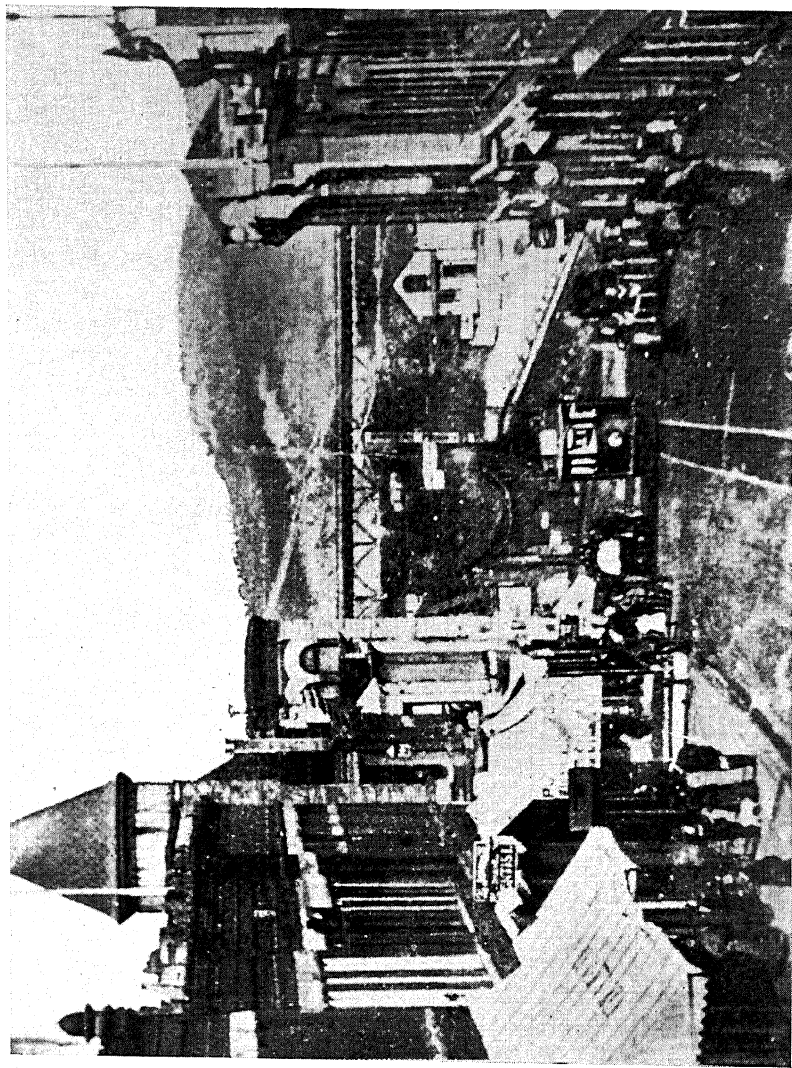
You wonder how the construction of a town that entailed so much trouble and so much money could have been a community secret.

"It wasn't," she says. "There was a grand opening of the hotel and



Natural bridge near Buffalo Gap.





Lower Main Street, Lead, before it fell into Homestake workings.

everybody drove down there to it. I frequently heard my father tell of what a grand turnout it was. And the town did a lot of business after that for several months." Another shred or two of evidence in an ancient advertising folder stored with the picture indicated some sort of stage connection to a point in Red Canyon on the Cheyenne route. Another trail over which there was some communication with the outer world ran south over Coffee Flats and across the Cheyenne River to some other unexplained connection on Hat Creek.

The librarian is a bright young woman with a fine memory. But there are some mysteries about Cascade that will be difficult to explain.

"I don't know about the stage connections," she says. "But people got there—great numbers of people—and they had to come by stage or wagon or on horseback. Neither of the railroads got in until 1891."

Annie Tallent in her book *The Black Hills, or Last Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs*, written around 1899, makes brief mention of Cascade as an elaborate health resort that failed to attract enough customers to keep it in business. According to her account a syndicate which she fails to identify bought the Cascade Springs and built a large sanitarium and dancing pavilion, which puts two more large buildings into the inventory alongside the store buildings and hotel. The suggestion that so grandiose an enterprise had fallen to pieces of its own weight seemed logical enough. What wasn't so obvious was how not only one capitalist but a syndicate of capitalists had been stupid enough to throw hundreds of thousands of dollars into a resort which the customers could reach by no regular means of transportation. . . .

"So they finally tore the hotel and some of the other buildings down," the young woman is saying. "I know about that because a lot of the stone was hauled up here. The sisters' hospital was built of it, and with what was left over they put up this library building. It must have been a big hotel. . . ."

So we bade farewell to charming old Cascade Springs as the golden sun etc. . . . But the matter was still in my mind the next day when I met a banker friend in Rapid City. I mentioned my puzzle.

"If all the investors were Easterners who didn't know anything about stagecoach travel you might be able to understand it," I said. "But so far as I can make out, all the members of the syndicate were men who lived in Hot Springs and vicinity and who knew that no matter how good a mousetrap you build you aren't going to see any customers unless

they can get to your shop. Were the members of this syndicate imbeciles?"

"They were not imbeciles," he said. "That is, not exactly. But they were financiers of a sort that we used to see more frequently out here at that time than we do now. They confused finance and betting on the horses. . . . A government bond or a *sure* winner at ten to one are both good investments, according to that particular school of thought. But no matter how closely they figure it, they always have to work without the confidence of the horse. . . .

"Now all this building spree went on there in Alabaugh Canyon in 1888 or 1889. The bulk of the work was finished and Cascade was a fine, going town in 1890. It had a lot of big buildings that were pretty well spread out, but they didn't begin to cover the land the syndicate had bought in there. One part of their holdings was a strip that came up just about the way Number 87 runs now, along the upper end of Sheps Canyon and then down into the south end of Hot Springs. Another strip went straight south, crossed the Cheyenne and ran up along Hat Creek.

"Well, this may look silly to you until you look at your map. There's a town on Hat Creek down near the Nebraska line called Ardmore. And along in the late eighties the Burlington Railroad had built into Ardmore. It didn't take any prophet to see that from Ardmore on there was only one practical route over which the railroad could move on into the Hills. It would have to follow Hat Creek and then cross the river and head north through some more valuable property belonging to the Cascade syndicate.

"So they tendered the whole works to the Burlington at what they felt was a reasonable profit, considering the fact that there wasn't any way for the railroad to go except through Cascade.

"So in a week or so they had it all back in their laps—the hotel, the stores, the pavilion, the sanitarium, caretakers' cottages and outhouses. . . . And the railroad cut across to Edgemont and went north from there.

"The route is about twenty-five miles longer than it would have been if the road could have been built down Hat Creek and it wouldn't have been necessary to put in that shuttle from Minnekahta. However, in the long run, it worked out all right. The railroad picked up enough business to pay for the added construction costs. So nobody really lost any money except the Cascade syndicate. . . . I have often wondered what they are going to do with their leftover property."

## CHAPTER 35

### YOUNG CHIEF PLENTY WORDS

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PINE RIDGE—*First in the News—Joe Walking Pigeon is happens come big fire with its pipe. Joe Walking Pigeon is maybe to make smoke with its pipe, is maybe lights teepee instead. Ashes is more but same thing. . . .*

—Dispatch from a Local Correspondent

It is many years now since my uncle Bill came into his office over Tom Sweeney's Hardware Store and announced the beginning of a new era for Paha-Sapa and any other remaining shrines of the Sioux.

"The Old West is finished," he observed dolefully as he hung up his hat. "Right down there in front of the Harney I just this minute saw a squaw wearing a corset."

You'd expect changes to come slowly in the world's oldest mountains, and they do. Spirit and tradition erode slowly, and an atmosphere as thick as that which hung over the mining camps of the eighties and nineties is not soon dissipated. It will probably be a long time before Bill's fears are entirely justified. But his implication that something had happened to the noble and independent Sioux Indian was certainly beyond argument.

Not so long ago a fine-looking contingent of Cheyenne River bucks attracted unusual attention in the parade that opened Deadwood's pageant—The Days of '76. They were dressed in war bonnets and costumes of beaded white buckskin that today are museum pieces. But that wasn't what caught the eye of the crowd. What got them a front-page paragraph in the *Pioneer-Times* was the fact that they were riding in a bright new convertible Buick, with an Ohio license.

The West, it was apparent, had moved a considerable distance even since my uncle Bill's day. The squaw whose vanity had provoked his comment had never ridden in a gaudy convertible with an Ohio license. She had never ridden—except aboard a travois or more recently in an old army wagon.

Time was when the Indian participants in these local shindigs would come pouring into town on ponies. They had few modern trappings and they looked like Indians. They thought no more of riding a hundred miles over the prairies than they had when they were skirmishing with Harney and Crook and Custer forty years before. They were an essential part of the show, then as now, at rodeos in Belle Fourche, Deadwood, Sturgis and Rapid City. Sometimes they became the most striking feature on the program as when, in 1927, they rode with a squadron of the Seventh Cavalry at Rapid. But, one recalls, nobody paid much attention to them, probably because they were as much a part of the scenery as the White Rocks or Crow Peak or Rockerville Hill.

What comes out of all this backsighting is the realization that the Sioux are still a part not only of the scene but of the life of the West River country. When you see them meandering aimlessly through the streets of any of the Hill towns they are more likely to be wearing faded blue jeans than bright blankets and ceremonial skins but you won't mistake them for Scandinavian corn planters and you'll know instinctively that you are somewhere on the far side of the Missouri.

Admitting that it is a violation of dramatic unity to present a lot of Oglala warriors in a conveyance designed for bobby soxers, no amount of bad stage management can change the identity or the significance of the actors. For a brief time, at least, they look the part of the brave, intelligent, unyielding breed who were overlords of these mountains by treaty with the United States of America. They are the living reminders of a cruel and fantastic era. And the Old West comes to life in their presence because they *are* the Old West.

Of recent years it has become possible for visitors to the Hills to see some of the authentic ceremonial dances of the Sioux and this after a long hiatus. One recalls that when the Indians of the Cheyenne River Reservation undertook to break the drought of 1936 by reviving the Snake Dance, they had trouble finding anyone who remembered the ritual. They pieced it together, finally after consulting about half the tribes in the Sioux Federation. That dozens of similar observances have been revived and recorded is due largely to the work of David Miller, a young paleface outlander who has spent his summers on Pine Ridge since 1935.

Miller, an artist of considerable gifts, came to the Hills to paint the portraits of surviving warriors, particularly those who had taken part in

the battle of the Little Big Horn. He put on canvas the faces of forty stalwarts whose line is just about extinct, but, what is more important, he learned the language of the Sioux and an amazing lot about their folkways and history.

"I have learned to like the Sioux the best of the Indian tribes," he said last year. "They've had more drama—they've had more hardships and done more fighting than the others. Despite all that has been done to them they are still a fine, upstanding race of people who have had a glorious past and certainly deserve a better future. They are highly intelligent and, oddly enough, adaptable. The Sioux, once the most warlike, are now the friendliest of the Indian tribes.

"The Sioux culture will soon be a thing of the past. Young Sioux, now, will have no part of the Omaha and Sun Dance. They refuse to learn the culture of their ancestors. They are turning, helplessly, to the white man's way and all the ancient traditions will soon be forgotten."

So after tireless effort against tribal apathy he has brought together a group to study and present the old dances and chants purely out of racial pride. There are young men in the company—which he takes to be a good omen for the continuing success of the project. And there are venerable chiefs like High Eagle and Iron Hawk whose age must be somewhere around ninety-five. Both these kindly, pleasant old men fought against Custer on June 25, 1876.

So the continuation of the Sioux folkways seems assured if only because Indians, like other people, are interested in doing things that bring them applause. Meanwhile Miller, along with most people who have the interests of the Indian at heart, has been preaching the need for a realistic educational system.

"The Navajos will retain their cultural identity for a long time yet," he commented somewhat bitterly. "They aren't so far advanced as the Sioux and their lands aren't anything that the white man wants. The young Sioux will have to be educated to take his place in the world on even terms with the white man . . . something that he cannot do now.

"Their morale is broken. They feel downtrodden. Their future is hopeless. . . ."

One agrees, of course, that the school system of the reservations could stand a lot of revision. And it is equally obvious that under present conditions the prospects of the Sioux are no better than they have been at any time since Custer camped on French Creek. But it is also true that the Sioux are a lot tougher than most people had believed. They were on

their way in the twenties to join the stuffed buffalo as museum exhibits of extinct American fauna. But suddenly they halted the march. While a casual observer might not suspect it, their immediate condition has been considerably bettered and they have credible evidence that the improvement will continue. The Indian population of the United States is now steadily increasing.

You don't hear so much any more about "The degenerate Lakotahs—what a pity!" Not since such men as Henry and Luther Standing Bear, and Chauncey Yellow Robe before them, has it been demonstrated how the Sioux mind responds to education.

Your present-day Indian in his dungarees and black felt hat may not look much like Crazy Horse in his war paint or Red Cloud defying the treaty makers. He can't make picture records like his grandfather made. He doesn't know how to shoot an arrow or swing a tomahawk. He probably never learned the trick of putting up a teepee. He is the *new* Indian, a different sort of Indian undoubtedly from any that Crook and Custer knew. But new or traditional, educated or illiterate, he still has his wits. He still cherishes a sense of the ludicrous for which his white enemies never gave him credit. He is the world's greatest exponent of what the experts call "dead-pan humor." He laughs—though not out loud in public—at the world that civilization has made out of a lot of old hunting grounds. He speaks good English when he wants to. He has quick observation and a long memory. He seems to take instinctively to natural science. He can express himself with unusual and subtle imagery but he seldom does—not in writing.

When he sits down to write, one judges from available evidence, he grasps the pen with all his fingers and carefully puts his tongue into his cheek. The result is something amazing in the field of current literature.

One of these authors who, to our way of thinking, rates as the top columnist of America, is the anonymous compiler of "Potato Creek (Pine Ridge) Echoes" for the *Custer County Chronicle*. There has been much speculation concerning his identity. Carl and Roy Sundstrom, publishers of the paper, profess that they don't remember or never knew. The material comes in and they print it. (You bet they print it! They're two of the smartest newspaper operators in South Dakota.) Cash payment is sent to a box in the Pine Ridge post office. And nobody, it is alleged, has so far discovered who owns the box.

One of the attachés of the newspaper volunteered the information that he had heard that the contributor's name was Iron Hawk. Iron

Hawk, as elsewhere mentioned, is ninety-five years old. "Potato Creek Echoes" somehow don't sound much like him.

We append a sample:

Potato Creek, July 22—First in news I heard one Spud Creek going to send the Duhammer on Rapid City and brought him new ten gallon hat, also a boots and fixed himself up in practical manner so all them Spud Creek widows and girls going to liked him and fall in a love on him. Maybe he's going to looked like 16 ages when he's all fix up from the Duhammers.

Mr. Jim Yankton and his wife have return from long convene at Interior, so everybody sure like to see them on our village. Long time ago Jim used to Spud Creek policeman and he's sure good cop cause nobody didn't drunk on night when he's a cop.

Vincent Iron Deer or "Tacta Maza" was convene in Pine Ridge long times now, so I think them Spud Creek girls sure going to lonesome and homesick for him, also maybe a lovesick. Also maybe Vincent find it new girl on Pine Ridge and married up with it on the summer.

Its rumor some mans was eat lots of them plain and fancy grubs on big feast and some are get a tipped over stomach and hurt in a belly to a practical extent, also some them mans are kinda illness on the night.

Also in the news I was heard it one Spud Creek was buyed his best girl big bag them cheap mixed candies and was take it to her on the night, so I think he sure like him and maybe was kissed him on thee night. But I didn't ask a whole question.

On first reading it may seem that these reports are written in code. But if you try again and let your mind drift with them, they seem to make sense. A stranger in the community may have a little trouble with one or two words. "Spud Creek" for Potato Creek is understandable though not very Indian. "Duhammer on Rapid City" is undoubtedly the Duhamel Mercantile Company which has long specialized in saddles and cowboy toggery.

The unknown reporter maintains his remarkable style in a second offering:

First in news Ruben Shot With Arrows was come home from Pine Ridge hospital on last week but here he's in a poor condition of his health and he's get a pretty low so I think he have to go back to hospital or maybe he's going to dead pretty soon. One night he was sure get low and looks like he's going to dead on the night but he didn't dead and he's feel better next day, so everybody on the village sure glad.



One Spud Creek he's got it a one single girl on the Kyle but here he's all the time stucked around Spud Creek so I think he's going to lonesomed for that girl pretty soon, also he's maybe going to lovesicked. Also I was heard he was send her one bag few cheap mixed candies on mail.

Also in the news Joega was kinda laid in big supply of them Bull Durhams on the rainy weathers, so now he's a full of a glee and he was said, now I could make some big smoke clouds if I'm rained in on the weathers.

Practically Chet Spindler was said I think it's going to cookie pretty soon, so everybody sure going to glad about that cause then theres a cookies on the store again and everybody for few sweet cookies.

Also in the news Pap Spindler was come up to village with Bill and Lulu Spindler from Nebr. a quite while ago and he was stayed on Chet and Bill places. Maybe he's going to find it a one widow on the Spud Creek and buy it a few mixed candies, but I didn't ask him a whole question.

(Bill Spindler, a schoolteacher at Potato Creek, has been named by some critics as the possible contributor of the "Echoes." On the other hand we have read Mr. Spindler's book *Badlands Trails* and the Spud Creek news doesn't sound like him any more than its sounds like Iron Hawk. But I didn't ask him a whole question.)

In late July there was another bulletin in the *Chronicle* concerning the health of Ruben Shot with Arrows and something more anent the love affairs of Vincent Iron Deer (Tacta Maza). Maybe the news was a little different but there was no change in style:

With a many regrets we have learn that our esteem friend Ruben Shot With Arrows was get a pretty low on Pine Ridge hospital on this times. Practically he's kinda low in his health and is illness long times now, so I hope he's going to improvement pretty soon.

At later day I was heard he was improvement on his health so all going to glad about that.

Also it's a rumor one Spud Creek he was ordered him new ice cream pants on other day from the Sears Roebuck wish book. He's going to wore it on a public. So I think he going to beat Tacta Maza with them Spud Creek girls on the night. So maybe Tacta Maza going to sorry about that.

All the time big firecrackers go popped off on the village so maybe it going July Fourth again pretty soon again. Looks like some them mans and boys going to celebrated till a snow fly.

Also in the news lots of people are celebrated 4th of Kyle so every-

body was had it pretty fine time. But here some are eat too much them grubs and are get a tipped over stomach on the night and feel kinda low on health.

And the social turmoil of Potato Creek was still going on a month later:

Chas. Under Baggage Sr. was helped the Chet Spindler cut it a grains on this times. Them two mans a good worker on Spud Creek so I think theyre going to done pretty quick and maybe them going to celebration then. Also I heard it going to rodeo pretty soon at Interior.

Also in the news one Spud Creek old man was drunking on the night on the Interior town and here he was lose off one side of his shoes on railroad track. Also he's too much drunked so them trains mans don't let him get on train to the Rapid City. Maybe he was have headache on the morning. I don't ask whole question.

Hinhanskala was bumping around long times now on Pine Ridge and Martin towns so maybe he was going to found new sugar cow and was married up with it. Also maybe he buy it a bag of few cheap mix candy on the Martin.

Sears Roebucks catalogs coming on the mails on a nowadays so's everybody was had a big wish book again.

Tacta Maza was bought it Willie Horn Cloud log house and was moved it to Chas. Pain On Hips on the last week, so I think he's going to married up pretty soon and enjoyed it a practically happiness and a prosperity.

Up to this moment we have given unwavering attention to the social news from Spud Creek and have considered its unidentified author with mixed emotions. In long years of occasional contact with the Sioux we never found one who talked even remotely like the oracle of Potato Creek. It had seemed impossible that one could write like that, even intentionally. But then came another *Chronicle* correspondent to destroy our cocksureness.

Reprinted from the *West River Progress*, Dupree S. D., appeared this piece of intelligence:

Billy Circle Eagle, of Red Scaffold, wrote the following eulogy over our old Indian friend, Rev. Thomas Blue Eyes, who passed away a month ago at a Pierre hospital:

By Billy Circle Eagle

"Old cowboy passaway first part of the June.

"Rev. Thomas Blue Eye passaway at Pierre hospital he was born in the state of the Canada year 1869. He was back in the states when was young, he was working for old Nercell when was sixteen years old age on Goat Lodge. Two year he was cowboy cooking for L-7 outfit on bad rivers country.

"After that he was worked for Circle D outfit on Mr. While Bill Colens wagon. Year 1898 he was married up on Miss Allmee Dupree she owner all tham Circle D. A. on shoulder cattle and horses. Rev. Thomas Blue Eye he make own ranch side of the fox ridge country. Mrs. Thomas Blue Eye he is deaded long year ago. Rev. Blue Eye he was 78 years old when passaway in June.

"Long year ago was Mr. Indian attacked cover wagon on California trail take three girls. Mr. Indian brought tham white girl onto Indian village. Some young Indian boy he was married tham girl. Short time later one of thes girl she have baby girl. When thes girl growing up she is married up Mr. Red Fox, that was Rev. Thomas Blue Eye father and her mother.

"Rev. Thomas his right name Red Fox but he have also white man eye, blue eye, so well know him by Rev. Thomas Blue Eye, tuwe te sui yelo. . . ."

No other example of Billy Circle Eagle's writing is available but one sample is enough to show that such composition isn't indigenous to Potato Creek. Maybe Circle Eagle wrote "Potato Creek Echoes." Maybe the anonymous reporter wrote the obituary for Reverend Thomas Blue Eyes. Maybe James Joyce wrote all of it. What difference does it make? Something of the same dreamy thought, if not exactly the same impromptu diction, is to be found in one Sioux document about whose origins there is no doubt:

I want to know what you doing travelling on this road. You scare all the buffalo away. I want to hunt in this place. I want you to turn back from here. If you don't I fight you again. I want you leave what you have got here and turn back from here.

I mean all the rations you have got and some powder. Wish you would write to me as soon as you can.

I am your friend. . . .

This one was dated four months after the battle of the Little Big Horn. It was addressed to General Nelson A. Miles and was signed "Sitting Bull."

On the strength of the literary evidence you could make out a good

case to show that the *new* Sioux isn't very new at all and that he is still a little more a part of the Black Hills than the faces on Mount Rushmore or the Rapid City snake pit.

Long ago was Mr. Indian attacked cover wagon in California. . . .

One Spud Creek going to send the Duhammer on Rapid City and brought him new ten gallon hat, also a boots and fixed himself up in a practical manner . . .

No, the Old West isn't dead yet. And it seems likely to be a long time dying.

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## INFORMATION PIECE VII

### *Keystone*

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KEYSTONE is said to have been named by some miner, probably Fred Cross, for his Masonic watch charm. He located a placer camp near the present site of the town in 1877. The first producing quartz, however, was turned up by William B. Franklin in the Keystone Gold Mine in 1891.

The Keystone Mine was sold in 1892 to some St. Paul promoters who put in a stamp mill and began to take out gold. In the meantime (in 1894) Franklin, with Thomas C. Blair, located another rich lode. He named it the Holy Terror. The Keystone Mining Company was taken over by the Holy Terror Gold Mining Company in 1897.

It is likely that no gold mine in the Hills has been the subject of so much legend as the Holy Terror. The ore was free-milling and high grade. For years there was a steady output averaging about twenty dollars a ton, and some portions of the lode are said to have assayed better than a hundred dollars a ton.

In 1899 Keystone had a population of 1,500, two churches—Congregational and Methodist—an undetermined number of useful saloons and no school. The camp, having started under the hand of a newly arrived civilization, was never any such wild-eyed bedlam as the Deadwood of 1876. But nobody would ever have mistaken it for a university town either. Money was easy and the future was bright.

The Holy Terror shaft was down to 1,100 feet in 1903 when several employees were killed in an explosion. Numerous lawsuits grew out of the accident and the mine shut down. After that there were quarrels between the principal stockholders

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concerning management and the Holy Terror has been idle ever since while the lower workings filled up with water.

Along in the twenties some dehydration was started—enough to keep the underground flood from getting completely out of control—and has been continued. The fact that the power plant was kept in operating condition was of great importance to Gutzon Borglum when he started his work on Mount Rushmore. There was always enough excess over requirements for the pumps to furnish him with what current he needed.

Until the figures on the mountain turned out to be another gold mine, the hopes of the neighborhood were based on the Holy Terror's reopening. In 1903 several mines were operating in the district. Their remains cover the cliffs along Battle Creek. But none turned out to be good enough to support the town in the style to which it had been accustomed. The population dwindled. Fire destroyed some buildings. Others just fell down and Keystone was rapidly becoming a ghost town in 1927 when Cal Coolidge stopped there on his way to dedicate Rushmore.

You still hear rumors that the Holy Terror is getting ready for business again—that there is more gold in the damp bottom of the mine than ever came out of the top. But nowadays nobody in town seems to care much.

Of recent years feldspar production has been important to the community and there has been considerable traffic in minerals seldom heard about: amblygonite, beryl, pollucite, lapidolite and andalusite—as well as some kinds of phosphates. During 1923, when there was a world shortage with resultant high prices some of the local opportunists turned a neat profit by producing arsenic. Eighty-seven different sorts of minerals are mined in the Keystone region, a larger variety than can be found in any area of similar size on earth.

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## HOUSE WITH A DOZEN FRONT DOORS

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HILL CITY—*The Harney Peak Tin Company's reduction plant, finished in 1892, operated for two months when it was closed down pending an adjustment of complications between American and foreign stockholders. . . . It has never been reopened. Since then Hill City has been a tourist city—headquarters for trips to Harney Peak and Sylvan Lake.*

—*Rapid City Journal*, July 6, 1936

ON Highway 85A, about a mile and a half north of Hill City, on the right-hand side of the road, stands Goodhaven, "The House with a Dozen Front Doors."

You might pass this simple old place time after time without noticing its peculiarities unless you happened to pause directly in front of it, because, except for its vague resemblance to a magician's cabinet there is nothing to distinguish it from hundreds of other frame dwellings of the eighties. It is a one-story affair with a gable roof and a porch running around two sides of it. It was built some time before one-story houses were standardized into bungalows, a substantial, comfortable place that was obviously the home of people at least comfortably well off. That its builders were also folks of some taste is evidenced in the absence of the gewgaw with which so many houses of the post-log-cabin era were covered in this region. It shows its period only by a bit of modest fretwork around the eaves and the corners of the porch roof. In most ways it seems normal and probably is. It is only when you take a good long look at it that you sense a mystery.

In the first place it does not seem to be adapted to its setting. It looks out across the highway toward an upthrust wall of volcanic rock. They say that this is one of the few places in the Hills where you can see bedrock standing straight on end. Behind it stretches a flat green meadow where cattle run. But this is no ranch house despite the fact that a

rancher appears to occupy it now. Neither is it a prospector's shack nor a mountain climber's chalet. And you begin to wonder why people who were so practical in their design for a home should have been so haphazard in picking a place to put it. . . . Then you notice the dozen doors. . . .

You very likely could ask the first fifty people you met on the street in Hill City for an explanation of this phenomenon and come away no wiser. Most of the old-timers went out when the Harney Peak Tin Company closed its mill, and newcomers haven't time to speculate about houses out on the highway unless they're for rent. But we were luckier. We spoke of the matter to the young lapidary at the south end of Main Street. He turned out to have been born and brought up in Hill City and nothing in the neighborhood was a secret to him.

"Oh, the house with all the doors," he commented. "Well, that house belonged to the Goods—Johnny and his wife Kit. She was a little bit of a thing—about three feet high. She wasn't a dwarf—she was just a *little* woman. All of us kids loved her because she seemed so much like one of us. . . .

"But the house— Do you know anything about Sheridan?"

In that district you don't ask what Sheridan? There is only one, the phantom of a town laid out in 1875 on Spring Creek eight miles north of the present Hill City, once the county seat of Pennington County and the active rival of Rapid City. Its founders ignored the government eviction orders and evaded the cavalry. And by the time the 1876 rush got under way they were well established in a going community.

The original settlers with reason had called the place Golden City. Spring Creek, always prodigal of gold, had been especially lavish here. If a man couldn't pan out twenty dollars a day (thirty-five dollars at the current market for gold) out of the hole he happened to be working, he left it and went looking for a new prospect. The bonanza played out eventually but while it lasted it was one of the richest placer deposits in history.

When law came to the Hills in 1877 Golden City was made the county seat of the newly established Pennington County. At that time the citizens decided to change the name to Sheridan.

Rapid City, which held a strategic location at the gateway to the Hills on the east, was much disturbed at the county-seat choice. But there was much to be said for it. Sheridan was in the midst of a boom. Thanks to its position as an important stop on the Deadwood-Denver stage line it was expanding rapidly. The easy money that was still com-



ing out of Spring Creek kept it from suffering too much in the Deadwood stampede. It was noisy and crowded and prosperous—and it also seemed to have a future.

The proud citizenry, late in 1877, put up a courthouse—a log structure described somewhere as “one saloon wide and two saloons long.” In other words it was about fifty feet by fifteen. And here the first term of the Federal circuit court was held in 1878 with Judge Granville G. Bennett presiding.

That was the high point of Sheridan’s spectacular rise. The gold began to thin out. The stage line took another route. The county seat moved to Rapid City. The United States circuit court was relocated in Deadwood. The troops that had been stationed in a near-by camp were ordered elsewhere. The population sadly resumed its trek toward the end of the rainbow.

Not everybody went. A few claims were still paying and there were still some prospects in the near-by Hills. The big flume to Rockerville was still under construction and there were still places to find wealth besides the riffles of a sluice box. So a number of rugged individualists stayed on in the town. Some of them prospered—including Johnny and Kit Good.

Many of the old log houses collapsed after two or three hard winters and wet springs. A fire in the middle eighties burned out most of those that remained. Johnny and Kit Good were homeless. The inhabitants put up new houses—frame houses in the modern mode. Another fire in 1895 destroyed the old courthouse and threatened to wipe out the town forever. But somehow it contrived to live on and on through the years. Around 1920 the population totaled only ten persons. Johnny Good and his wife were still there.

The years hadn’t been too painful. Johnny had saved his money and invested it wisely. They had an assured income—a large part of it from stock in the Homestake Mine. He still got commissions as a mining engineer investigating old properties or appraising new. And they were as nearly without worry as one ever gets to be in advanced middle age.

The depression had one effect on them, however. It brought into being the Civilians’ Conservation Corps. And the C. C. C., at the behest of foresters and water conservationists, began to wander through the Black Hills making lakes.

There was an ideal spot for a lake where Spring Creek turned eastward into the amazing slot that it had carved through the mountains. . . . All you had to do was run a dam across the narrow place at the north

end of Sheridan—about three miles below the place where the Rocker-ville flume once started on its fifteen-mile journey. And this lake, the engineers pointed out, would be a real lake, not a mere puddle. And there wouldn't be much trouble about property rights because so few people would be affected.

Presently an agent came to see the Goods. He told about the projected dam and how everything left in Sheridan would have to go including the monument that marked the site of the first courthouse.

Mrs. Good rebelled. "This is our property and you can't make me move," she said.

The agent told her that she would be well paid for the homestead but that didn't interest her either. "This is my home. It's the sort of house I want. I'm too old now to bother about another."

"Then you're not wanting to stay here because you're attached to Sheridan?"

"I don't care a hoot about Sheridan. But I won't leave the house."

So they compromised. They moved the house some six miles down the road toward Hill City and set it up on new foundations on the edge of the meadow. It was a pleasant place and not too far from town, now that Johnny was going to get one of those automobiles. . . .

"So that's how the house comes to be out there," our historian observed. "It belongs to C. G. Swanson now. Kit Good and her husband died a month or so apart four years ago. But they were happy out there. As I say we used to see a lot of them. I never heard her regret the old days or Sheridan or complain about anything. Everything was always all right with her—although I guess it must be pretty hard to keep that place warm in a tough winter. . . .

"And the doors? Oh, yes. The old houses in Sheridan were built to hold off Indian attacks. They had portholes shoulder-high instead of ordinary windows. And little Kit got caught in one of those places in the big fire. Something blocked the door and she was too small to get up to a porthole. She was deathly afraid of fire ever after that. So she had a house built with a door to the outside from every room, and when it was moved she had it put where there wouldn't be any other house near it.

"She used to joke about the doors. She said she'd always wanted a lot of doors so it would be easier for all her friends to get into her house. Pretty idea, wasn't it?"

We said it was—and unusual, too. The last house of many doors we remembered seeing was a Chicago mobster's hide-out near Phoenix.

Like Kit Good he was concerned about his friends. We admitted that the whole thing must have been a great comfort.

He nodded reminiscently. "It was to her," he said. "But there were some drawbacks—a dozen keys, a dozen doorbells, a dozen places to let the cat out and eleven different places to let the cat back in . . ."

On which high note he left the problem to the current resident.

You'll look a long time before you find a trace of the Golden City where Johnny and Kit Good passed most of their lives. Like sunk Lyonesse, Sheridan now lies beneath the waves—twenty feet down. Blotting out the memory of the richest placer deposit of its era there now spreads a four-hundred-acre lake.

## CHAPTER 37

### THE APOTHEOSIS OF CRAZY HORSE

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HILL CITY—*Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski has packed up his drums and gone home. We don't know why.*

—Statement, August 1948, on behalf of  
Hill City Fife and Drum Corps

It may not be in your time, most probably not in mine, but one day the amazed traveler through the Black Hills is going to look up from Custer toward Harney and see the gigantic shadow of Crazy Horse riding across the sky like the Brocken specter. In this case, however, the astonishing ghost will be contrived not of luminous mist but of solid granite, the top of a mountain now being reshaped by Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski. Ziolkowski says that it will take the better part of a lifetime to blast out of the rock this new contribution to what Gutzon Borglum used to call "the world's colossal sculptures." But when he has finished a three-dimensional warrior on a horse ninety feet high will begin to keep an eternal watch on the spot where Custer started all the trouble for the Sioux. It is pretty well conceded that there will be nothing else resembling it on earth—not even Rushmore.

The idea for a memorial to the Indians who fought so bravely and so vainly to preserve the sanctity of these haunted mountains originated with Chief Henry Standing Bear. He had seen and had been deeply impressed by the majesty of Borglum's great stone faces looking out calmly over a land from which the Sioux Nation had all but vanished. He had gone back to his home on Pine Ridge a little saddened and he had presented a suggestion to other chiefs of the Lakotahs sitting around a council fire.

"I have dreamed," he told them, "of a mountaintop memorial like the vast carving on the peak that they now call Rushmore—a picture on a grand scale of our historic leaders, so that the white people may know that the red race had brave men and great men also. . . ."

The chiefs considered and came speedily to a conclusion that Stand-

ing Bear's plan was good. But they thought the memorial would be more effective were it to honor one outstanding leader of the Sioux instead of many—and they were virtually unanimous in favor of Crazy Horse, who has come to be known as the great strategist of the Indians' remarkably successful campaigns between 1868 and 1877.

Chief Standing Bear wrote to Ziolkowski, winner of the first sculptural award at the New York World's Fair in 1939. The sculptor who had worked for a brief time on the Rushmore project was impressed. He made a trip from Connecticut to Pine Ridge to discuss the matter with the chiefs and after long consideration agreed to take on the job.

"I decided to accept the offer one day when I was sitting in a foxhole on Omaha Beach," he said later. "I thought to myself, Well, if I can sit around here doing this sort of stuff for a couple of years at sixty dollars a month, I can sit for the rest of my life on a mountaintop in the Black Hills doing something I like to do."

He came back to the Hills country in 1947 and found a suitable mountain four miles out of Custer on the "New" Road—so called because it is one of the oldest trails in the area—to Hill City. He established a camp near the site of the vanished Berne Station on the C. B. & Q. Railroad and working virtually alone through the winter built a combination dwelling and studio. He moved in "officially" early in 1948.

As might have been expected his arrival started a cultural argument on the scale of a Donnybrook Fair.

There have always been plenty of people in the world who object to the carving up of mountains just on general principles . . . and they are by no means an unimportant minority. There are others who contend that one mountain memorial is enough for an area the size of the Black Hills—and a subgroup expanding on this idea who believe that a unique exhibit like Rushmore should remain unique. We need not mention the no-doubt artistic operators of well-established motels, Olde Souvenir Shoppes, hot-dog stands and similar wampum gatherers who take a dim view of any division of business. A town, for instance, can get terrifically upset about assaults on artistic integrity and violations of good taste when it has a monopoly on such a free-milling nonrefractory lode as the Shrine of Democracy.

Indignant subscribers demanded that newspaper editors do something to prevent the use of public funds by any mountain carver who set himself up in business subsequent to 1927. About the same time they discovered that the only money expended so far on the project, including

the purchase of the mountain and several hundred acres of ranch land had come out of the sculptor's own pocket. The letters stopped and the Black Hills-Bad Lands Association began to look upon Mr. Ziolkowski with a less jaundiced eye.

Before the end of June the Crazy Horse wrangle had gone far afield. Numerous Indians whose opinions were respected on the Pine Ridge Reservation began to criticize the choice of Crazy Horse as the Great Chief of the Sioux Nation. A loud and indignant faction composed principally of relatives of the candidate declared that the one man of the Sioux Nation worthy of sculptured immortality was Red Cloud, winner of a hundred battles. He conducted Red Cloud's War in 1866. He forced the abandonment of Fort Kearney and prevented the opening of the Bozeman Trail. He was a leader in the defeat of Custer at the Little Big Horn. In 1868 he signed the treaty of Laramie and became a reservation Indian.

Crazy Horse was known as the great tactician of the Sioux long before he met General George Crook in the Battle of the Rosebud on June 16, 1876. The accolade had been given him not only by his own people but by such qualified critics as Carrington, Forsyth, Crook and Custer. But he reached his greatest stature on June 16 as leader of the first organized band of Sioux that had ever met in pitched battle an organized unit of the United States Army. The Sioux won that battle as they won on the Little Big Horn. Crazy Horse was stabbed in the back by a Fort Robinson guard after coming in for a conference in 1877. He never signed a treaty with anybody.

The temper of the South Dakota Indians reached such a pitch over the comparison of these two biographies that a meeting of chiefs was called to settle the argument. They deliberated three days in July at a tribal council watched by newspaper correspondents from all over the country. And in the end they gave a slight margin of favor to Crazy Horse.

In the meantime other arguments sprang up here and there about associated subjects. One Nelson A. Mason, attorney and Indian authority of Fort Yates, North Dakota, declared a little belatedly that the name of the Chieftain Ta-Sunke Wit-Ko (previously referred to as Crazy Horse) had been badly mistranslated. The Ta-Sunke part of it was all right, having the meaning "horse." But Wit-Ko, Mr. Mason protested, could not possibly mean "crazy" or "insane."

"The correct interpretation," he said, "would be, 'His horse is spirited,' meaning one whose horse is spirited—prancing with the rider."

The *Christian Science Monitor*, taking up the battle from afar, declared editorially that "Crazy Horse by any other name would be colorless—just another colleague of Sitting Bull in the Little Big Horn battle. . . ."

F. Wayne Whitlock of Spearfish, in a letter to the *Rapid City Journal*, disputed a suggestion by one Frank Fiske that Ta-Sunke was actually the Oglala word for "dog." Which might make the name of Ta-Sunke Wit-Ko either "Spirited Horse" or "Crazy Dog," depending on whose Sioux dictionary you happened to have with you. Mr. Whitlock made the matter a little more confusing. He wrote:

Chief Sword of Pine Ridge was an intimate friend of mine almost forty years ago. At the time Crazy Horse and his wild warriors were routing Crook's armies, young Sword was one of the general's trusted scouts. . . . As to the translation, Sword called him "Crazy Horse," and he understood enough English to know that HORSE does not mean DOG. Also the young educated Indians of Pine Ridge always called him "Crazy Horse."

After this the going got a little rougher. Mr. Whitlock agreed that "sunke" (or "sunka") was really the Oglala word for "dog." But he explained this quickly and lucidly:

The Ogalalla word for "Horse" is "sunktanka," pronounced "shoon-ka-ka." [The "n" indicates a nasal sound for the middle "a."]

The word could mean "a big dog" (instead of "a horse") but in the Yankton and Teton Sioux, the word is "Isun kawakan" which indicates the real meaning—"holy dog," or "dog sent from above" (wakan)."

All of this, of course, was grist to the mill of Korczak Ziolkowski, whose name in the Teton Sioux is still pronounced Korshak Jokovski. By that time there was nobody who could read in all the West River country who did not know that while Oglala linguists were making a mountain out of a mole hill, this talented sculptor was making an Indian out of a mountain.

Mr. Ziolkowski observed without rancor:

"I can't change history. The first I heard of Crazy Horse was when Chief Standing Bear wrote to me and asked if I would carve a monument in the Black Hills for the Indians.

"Later I attended a conference with Representative Francis Case of South Dakota and members of the Indian Bureau in Washington to dis-

cuss the proposed memorial. Experts were asked what Indian would best represent the Sioux in their natural state and their unanimous reply was 'Crazy Horse.' . . . If there was a mistranslation of the name it was made a long time ago and it's too late to change the history books now."

The model for the project shows the chieftain with loose hair blowing in the wind and the sculptor mentioned that he had been criticized about this, too.

"I have been told by countless Indians, including Standing Bear, High Eagles, Black Elk, Comes Again and Little Soldier [son of Sitting Bull], that the Sioux always wore their hair loose and flying when they went into battle," he said. "The Indians told me that they braided their hair only when in council or for some ceremony.

"I intend to put an 'Indian's Indian' on the mountain to symbolize the Sioux, not a 'white man's Indian.'

"I shall probably make several models before I begin to blast the figure out of the mountain. I shall make any changes that the Indians want . . . but so far I haven't had any complaints from the Indians."

Mr. Ziolkowski has not only the feeling for public relations but the fine sense of showmanship characteristically displayed by mountain carvers. Before he became interested in the perpetuation of Sioux tradition he was one of the country's most enthusiastic collectors of colonial drums—barrellike instruments of the sort pictured in "The Spirit of '76." When he moved his home from Connecticut to the Hills an imposing array of drums came with him. Almost before anybody outside of Custer was aware of his plans for making an Indian Rushmore out of Thunderhead Mountain he had organized the Noah Webster Fife and Drum Corps of Hill City. The corps in the authentic costumes of the colonial army began to beat the Ziolkowski drums at American Legion meetings and other patriotic exercises all over the state. They were outstanding features of the annual parades in several of the Hills cities and won prizes wherever any were offered.

Before the end of the season, however, Mr. Ziolkowski announced a reorganization. He took his drums home and formed the Noah Webster Fife and Drum Corps of Crazy Horse. Fourteen citizens of Hill City signed a round robin in protest:

We do not know Mr. Ziolkowski's motive for taking his drums and his name for the corps away from Hill City and moving it to Crazy Horse.



It may have been that he no longer cared to share the publicity of the drum corps with Hill City. It would seem that whatever his experience in carving mountains into colossi, he most assuredly has the right temperament for it. . . .

Because this type of musical organization has created such a great amount of interest in the Black Hills, it is our intention to continue with the Fife and Drum Corps of Hill City.

Whatever one may say about this cultural dispute, it must be admitted that temperament had nothing to do with the principal troubles that met him at the Custer Station. His preliminary construction problems were simple but they were construction problems. He had to solve a housing problem by cutting his own timber and hauling it to a mill in Custer to be cut. He had taken title to a ranch, most of which lies along U. S. 85A, but because of a change in the routing of the highway he had to lay out about two miles of road. He had all the right papers to prove that he was the owner of Thunderhead Mountain. And then he found out that he didn't own it.

This was probably the worst situation he is likely to have to face for some time. He had title to Thunderhead all properly recorded. But he had paid no attention to mineral rights and while he was in the East arranging for his removal to the Hills somebody filed a claim on his mountaintop. (Under the laws of South Dakota the claimant was thereby given the right to tunnel and blast or remove the surface of a strip of land 600 feet wide and 1,500 feet long.)

There was nothing left for the sculptor to do but negotiate, which he did. He has never revealed how much he had to pay or the name of the man he paid it to. But anyway he paid. The principal difference between the New West and the Old is that with the coming of civilization claim jumpers began to have legal rights.

As a result of this episode the government took the lands adjoining the mountain out of the public domain and this was the nearest thing to help outside that the Crazy Horse Memorial had received when on June 3, 1948, Ziolkowski set off the first blast at the dedication ceremonies. Governor George T. Mickelson presided over the meeting which was attended by Chief Standing Bear, six or seven warriors who had fought with Ta-Sunke Wit-Ko, and a large outpouring of local notables.

Articles of incorporation for the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation were filed with the Secretary of State at Pierre on August 15. A limit of \$1,000,000 was placed on the value of the property to be held by the foundation and the original directors were listed as Paul Bellamy, Rapid

City; Jarvis Davenport, Sturgis; Lee R. Girton, Sioux Falls; Eric Heiderpriem, Custer; George R. Hunter, Deadwood; former Governor Leslie Jensen, Hot Springs; Dr. Russell Jonas, Spearfish; E. H. Lighter, Rapid City; Harold Lovre, Watertown; Dr. F. E. Manning, Custer; Charles H. J. Mitchell, Brookings; William M. Moreton, Custer; K. F. Olsen, Sturgis; Dean R. F. Patterson, Vermillion; Dr. G. C. Redfield, Rapid City; Carl Sundstrom, Custer; Harlan A. Walker, Lead; and Richard B. Williams, Sturgis.

Declared the preamble to the articles:

History repeatedly has witnessed the submergence of minorities. . . . The culture and the traditions of the conquered not infrequently have been lost and posterity has thus been deprived of a valuable historical record. . . . The culture and traditions of the American Indian in their sociological, political and economic progression are in danger of being obliterated.

Henry Standing Bear, a Sioux chief, sensing this calamity, conceived the idea of an indestructible memorial to the Sioux Indian nation, in the form of a portrait likeness of the Sioux leader Crazy Horse, carved out of the lasting granite of his Paha-Sapa.

This portrait likeness, according to an estimate based on current material and labor costs, will require about five million dollars' worth of dynamiting and chiseling. At the end of thirty years, one gathers from the same source, it will be nearing completion as the biggest piece of statuary in the world. From base to top it will measure five hundred feet. Crazy Horse's horse from nose to tail will be four hundred feet long.

Every now and then one hears reports that the Pine Ridge council's decision on the comparative greatness of Crazy Horse and Red Cloud has left a large group of the Sioux Nation unconvinced. However, the old braves don't seem to be working up the blood pressure that might have accompanied such an argument in the old days. Whatever they think, they aren't likely to voice any opposition so long as the Indian memorial has an Indian on it.

James Red Cloud, aging grandson of the great warrior, has already given his support to the project.

"I am satisfied that history recognizes my grandfather as a leader of his people and a brave warrior. But Crazy Horse, too, was a fearless fighter and a good leader. And I think it is only right that the monument should be named after whomever Sculptor Ziolkowski wishes it to be named after. It's a memorial to the Sioux. But the only money being spent on it is what comes out of his own pocket."

## CHAPTER 38

### COALS TO NEWCASTLE

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NEWCASTLE, WYOMING—*Newcastle is a shipping point for lumber, oil, bentonite, sheep, cattle, hogs, turkeys and dairy foods. On Saturday, Newcastle's busy day, fashionably dressed people rub elbows with cowpunchers in broad brimmed hats and high heeled boots, and long haired sheepherders just in from the range . . .*

—*Wyoming Guide*

As antiquity is rated in the Black Hills, Newcastle, Wyoming, is a newcomer and an upstart. It is a community without a past you can hear from the graybeards of Hot Springs which was founded as far back as 1883. It never knew the gold rush, they'll tell you. Nobody ever panned a fortune out of the mud of its Main Street. No historic bum ever shot the ears off some other historic bum in some romantic saloon called Five-Deuce Mike's. Its police blotter never displayed the names of true Westerners like Calamity Jane or Horse-Faced Harriet or the Cryin' Squaw. Nobody ever got shot by the Indians . . . not in Newcastle. It wasn't a real rootin'-tootin' camp, declare the old men with the magic memories. It was a real-estate development.

If you believe any of that you'll be surprised at what you see in Newcastle. It has more of the frontier atmosphere than any other town in the neighborhood except, perhaps, Deadwood. It looks Western, and there isn't anything ersatz about its front. It is Western. And except that it's cleaner and a little safer it looks a little like what you think a really prosperous gold camp ought to look like. It's too bad, you decide finally, that such a promising spot as this should have no traditions in keeping with its fine scenery. But you don't have to worry about it long. Sooner or later, you're bound to hear about Tubbtown and the stage depot that antedated Tubbtown, and Fanny's Peak which had been located by Fanny and an unnamed Indian even before that. . . .

"In those days," said an old lad who was sunning himself in front of Dr. Jenney's transplanted stockade, "in those days things wasn't just the same as now. The railroad wasn't here. And that tower on the courthouse wasn't here. So's if the town had been here it wouldn't have stuck up enough so's anybody could see it. The way I figger it out, all the people was down there along the stage line, somewheres down there around Whoop-up Creek. . . ."

"But that wasn't Newcastle," I protested. "Newcastle wasn't here."

He looked at me sadly. "What makes a town?" he wanted to know. "What difference did it make whether we was down by Whoop-up or up there on old Mondell's front porch? Suppose you got in front of St. Louis and shoved it a couple blocks west. Would it still be St. Louis? Or would it be Omaha?"

"I get your point," I said.

The stage line coming up to the Hills from Cheyenne followed approximately the route of U. S. 85A. But to get to Custer it had to veer right, which it did a few miles south of Fanny's Peak. Fanny, it seems, was a hardy pioneer who had come into the region before the Deadwood stampede. Chased by an Indian, she had dived off a point of rock into the gulch as she seems to have been doing at other spots and under different names at regular intervals since the nation's great westward trek began.

So there was a relay station at the turning-off place—down on Salt Creek (a few miles south of Fanny's Peak), center of a community about as large as those that later became Buffalo Gap and Hermosa and Piedmont. And there seems to have been another station for a time near the Jenney Stockade on Stockade Beaver Creek. But for these outposts nobody had yet thought up the name Newcastle.

Along in the late eighties, DeLoss Tubbs of Custer got interested in the progress of the Burlington branch line to Sheridan, Wyoming. He guessed, after taking a look at some of eastern Wyoming, that it might very well come up along the upper Cheyenne River and then, possibly, along Beaver Creek and bear northwest past Fanny's Peak. It occurred to him that a townsite near the old stage station might be a sound investment. In this he was smarter than other promoters, such as those who built the Arabian Nights town at Cascade Springs, but he lacked a little of being smart enough.

Tubbs laid out a town on Stockade Beaver Creek and built a store. In a few months he knew that he had guessed right about the railroad.

Large numbers of homesteaders who had heard the glad news came to his door and then, presently, the advance guard of a horde of track workers. The scenes on the roads might not have approximated those of the gold rush, but only an expert could have told the difference. There were men in wagons and oxcarts and afoot and on horseback and in chartered stagecoaches and in buggies—great noisy mobs of them. But, unlike the gold seekers, none of them knew where he was going or what he was going to do after he got there.

At first Tubbs found it difficult to sell any lots. The drift of these belated pioneers continued west and north. But in this emergency appeared F. R. Curran, one of the country's first real students of town planning and scientific housing.

Mr. Curran came onto the scene with a three-wagon bull train which he had guided all the way from Cheyenne—or maybe Custer. He looked at the melee around Tubbs's Store and found it good.

"I have two wagonloads of skull varnish," he announced. "And this looks to me like an ideal place to start a place of refreshment . . . which I do herewith, as of now."

In a few minutes he had piled up some boxes and a plank and had set up a bar. Tubbs, just by way of courtesy, was the first customer.

"It's all right," he said dubiously. "But you need a tent or something. It may rain."

"Forget it!" advised Mr. Curran. "The bullwhackers are out getting some logs and tomorrow I shall build in the scientific way. . . . The old idea was to get a saloon and bring a bar into it. Me, I've got a bar and I'll build a saloon around it." Which he did.

Curran's Saloon was instantly recognized by the wanderers on the road as the unmistakable sign of a permanent town. So they parked their horses and bulls and wagons and settled down in its shadow. Almost overnight the town was a going concern. When about a hundred had settled down in tents or wagon boxes or in huts made of clay and wattles, Mr. Curran or Mr. Tubbs called a meeting. A mayor and councilmen were elected and a set of ordinances passed for the maintenance of order in what they now called officially "Tubbtown."

Only one of the ordinances has come down to us—a highly novel form of toll assessment. It was ordered "that strangers of any class whatsoever shall not pass through or around the municipality of Tubbtown without paying a toll sufficient to 'set 'em up to the bunch.'" And whatever may have been the fate of the other ordinances, this one was enforced. No matter how they came traveling, the travelers complied. And hav-

ing paid their toll at Curran's tollhouse, they generally decided to remain in Tubbtown and get their own back through taxes on other travelers.

Probably because everybody was engaged in the tax-collection business nobody had much time for gambling and the other pursuits that had provoked homicide in Deadwood. It began to get a reputation up and down the road as the most completely safe and orderly boom town in the history of the West. . . . The accuracy of the report depends, of course, on one's definition of "order." But anyway the undertakers did no business in Tubbtown.

Two months after the eager pioneers had built the town around the saloon that had been built around the bar a printer arrived leading a pack mule on which he had tied a hand press and a cigar box full of type. He set up the *Stockade Journal*, predecessor of the *Newcastle News-Letter Journal*, and apparently was quite successful. His only complaint was the twenty-four-hour schedule on which the town worked. He got no sleep unless he took his blankets a couple of miles in any direction from Curran's resonant saloon. And frequently, to get out his paper he was forced to haul his entire printing plant up into the piny hills.

Tubbtown—whoopee without harm, mirth without murder—was in many ways the ideal community or as close to the ideal as this region ever came in its tender years. But, despite the prophetic vision of De-Loss Tubbs, and the practical leadership of F. R. Curran, it had a sudden death. The Burlington laid out a townsite of its own two miles away on the edge of what promised to be a good coal field. . . . They called it Newcastle.

They were right about the coal. Frank Mondell, who was working during the late eighties for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, discovered it. And that fact rather than any such crystal gazing as Mr. Tubbs's led to the routing of the railroad through this area.

The coal—a good supply of it—was in an almost inaccessible spot in a narrow gulch subsequently called Coal Creek Canyon. The Burlington ran a spur up the canyon to the field two miles north, and (because the place was so hard to get to) set up a town around the site of what was to be the main hoist. They christened this town "Cambria." It flourished for thirty-nine years and delivered twelve million tons of good steam coal.

There have been few coal towns in the United States like it. In so far

as possible in the coal-mining business its inhabitants lived a comfortable and prosperous life. The rows of houses jammed together on the floor of the gulch had the deadly similarity of such habitations in coal communities all over the country but they were weather tight and well kept up. There was a three-story hotel, probably the most modern in this end of the Hills. There were some substantial municipal buildings, a bank, an opera house, a lodge hall, a couple of churches and a commissary building in the town itself. The school was on the west rim of the canyon reached by a flight of six hundred steps up which the children climbed twice a day. The company store was one of the most remarkable in the Northwest. It had a stock like that of big city department stores and maintained a price policy that drew trade from as far away as Deadwood.

There were continuous programs at the opera house. Johnny and Della Pringle were favorites who returned year after year for one-week stands. Another perennial was the Georgia Minstrel Troupe with Billy Kersands. And the biggest hit in the history of the theater was the spoken version of *Faust*.

From its beginning Cambria was a town without a saloon. Beer was permitted, however, and wagonloads were brought up from Newcastle. This routine, thanks to the size of the trade and the superfluity of Newcastle beer merchants trying to get it, gave the world a preview of Chicago's trouble with prohibition. There were highjackings and robberies and murders on the Newcastle Road. The irate citizenry of Cambria finally restored order with a couple of lynchings.

About five miles north of Newcastle on 85 along Salt Creek are some impressive stone buildings that look like part of an English university. At the moment they are occupied by a Bible school. The previous tenants were the visiting dudes who patronized the "Flying V Ranch." But until 1928, these buildings housed the directorate and were the public showplace of the Cambria Coal Company. The main building, put up as a memorial to the men who discovered the Cambria field, formerly contained an excellent museum. The principal hall is an effective specimen of interior timbering.

Just beyond these buildings on the road to Lead, a dim trail leads off to the left, crosses the ridge and dives down into what remains of Cambria. Vandals and looters had begun their work before the war, so little remains to justify the tiresome climb over the hill. Once it was possible to drive an automobile all the way from the administration buildings to the hotel and back again, but years ago most of the road was washed

out. In the days of the Flying V tourists visited the place on horseback. But the Flying V has gone. As a walk it is an unrecommended two miles.

There have been few ghost towns like Cambria, chiefly because few towns collapse suddenly after so long a period of development. Physically Cambria was in the best period of its existence when the coal began to play out, clean and prosperous-looking, glistening with fresh paint. As Joe Barnes of Newcastle remarked, "She made a right pretty corpse."

The residents had had some warning of what might happen. In 1927 the engineers began to see that the vein of anthracite was beginning to pinch out. They notified the company officials who got ready to liquidate. A notice was sent up from the president's office and tacked to the bulletin board at the pit head. . . . The mine would continue to operate until a specified day in 1928. If by twelve o'clock noon on that day the coal had shown no improvement in quality, the plant would shut down permanently and the municipality of Cambria would dissolve. . . . A reasonable period of time would be given employees to find other dwelling places and move out their personal belongings.

Twelve o'clock on D-day was a tense and tragic moment. Very nearly a thousand people, some of whom had been born and brought up in the town, stood massed in the silent street about the tippie waiting the signal—the shutdown or the go-ahead. Hope was already gone, for they were miners and they knew what had come out of the shaft the preceding night. But of course there was always a chance. . . .

The whistle blew—a crack of doom in the quick short blasts known to everybody in the town as a disaster warning. Black-faced men began to file slowly out of the shaft house . . . the final shift was coming off the job. A tide of men and women turned and began a slow, shuffling, voiceless procession back to their homes.

In the bank a couple of tellers were checking records of accounts already settled. The clock struck twelve as the whistle began to howl. With one accord the clerks tossed their pens like spears against the wall—and there six years later they were still sticking.

By the time the last man had come up out of the mine the populace was well on its way over the hill—in Model-T Fords, wagons, buggies, or whatever transportation they could muster. Simultaneously everybody in town had decided not to accept the company's period of grace. By midnight there wasn't a soul left in the town except the men moving the stock of the company store.



In 1934 I came over the ridge into Cambria with only a vague idea of what I was going to find. The sudden view of it from the crest was unbelievable. There was no ruin here (not then) no hint of disaster. In the bright, clear sunlight there seemed to be no reason nor room for ghosts. I went on down the badly gullied road into the town, half expecting to run into a few lingering citizens or at least a corps of guards. But there was nobody.

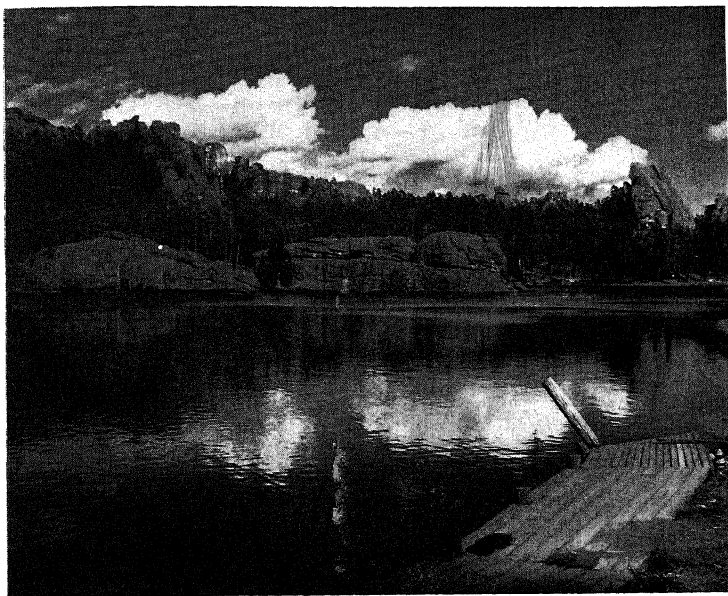
All of the houses were intact, even to the windowpanes but in nearly all of them the front doors stood open. In about half of them were indications that the inhabitants had walked out as if in flight from a flood without a thought for personal possessions. In one cottage the table had been set for three. Remnants of the noonday meal that had been in preparation when the whistle sounded its last trump still were to be seen in a rusted frying pan and a pair of burned-out pots.

Farther down the street near the hotel a coffin lay across the sidewalk. Whether it was a bit of abandoned stock from the furniture store across the street or some paraphernalia from the lodge hall I never learned.

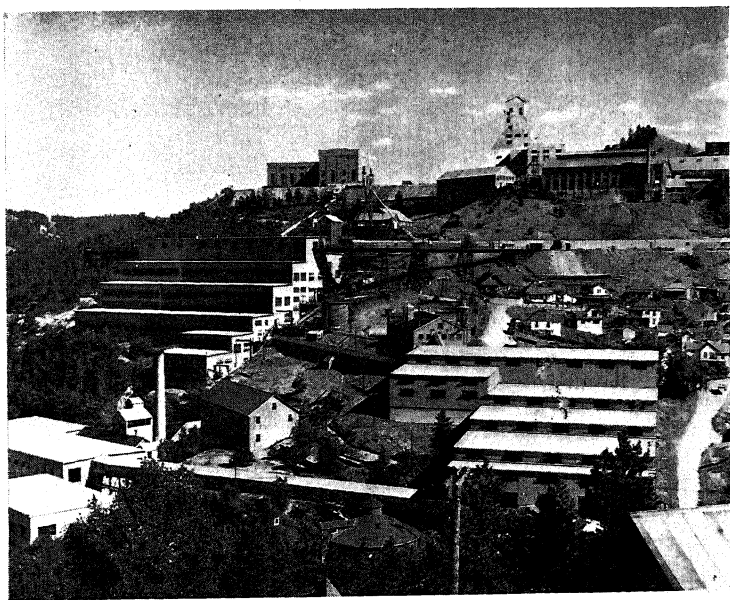
At the tipple there was some evidence that the engine-room crew had walked out without bothering to pull the fires from under the boilers. In the garden in front of the hotel a lawn sprinkler had been working; the valve at the hose connection was still turned on full. There were no flowers left in the elaborate beds and anyone could see what had happened here. . . . Long after the last man had gone up over the crest—days and days afterward—this sprinkler had gone on unceasingly tossing droplets into the air of this empty town. For a week—for a month—perhaps longer, the *clatter-clatter* of its futile performance had gone on until the last of the water in the reservoir tank on the hill was exhausted. Then it, too, had gone out of business. . . .

Shadows were gathering in the canyon when I started out. The sun was lower and a little breeze had come up. Shutters were banging somewhere and the sign in front of the old drugstore began to squeak. There was explanation enough for any of the psychic phenomena I might have seen in my last glance over my left shoulder but that did not make them any more cheering.

On the porch of a cabin at the foot of the outbound trail was an old-fashioned rocking chair that I had somehow missed on my way down. As I looked, it suddenly began to rock in grandmotherly cadence with an accompanying creak of loose rungs. I took another look to make certain that I hadn't overlooked an old lady with a lapful of knitting. There



Sylvan Lake.



World's greatest gold mine, the Homestake.



Sitting Bull.



The dying Red Cloud.



Crazy Horse. Memory sketch by Fred Hans may be his only portrait.



Big Foot.

wasn't any old lady. While I stood there gaping foolishly, the rocker slowed down and stopped. Then, ten seconds later, the door alongside it opened and closed with a bang.

Newcastle had a very fine time of it during the good years and never suffered too disastrously in the bad. A few of the mansions that the coal and cattle barons hung on the hillsides during the nineties are still to be seen, some of them with their original furnishings, perfect examples of their period. The home of Frank W. Mondell, discoverer of the anthracite field and later Republican floor leader in Congress, was one of the most elaborate of these until it was converted into a hospital during the war. Some of the other old manses are beginning to look a little worn but in the main these plush and scrollwork evidences of what made Newcastle are holding up pretty well. Surprisingly, the wealth that came out of Cambria has outlived the town that produced it.

There are ghosts of a sort in Newcastle that have nothing at all to do with ghost towns like Cambria or Tubbtown. Nobody knows where they came from or what for. But anyway they're here. Unlike Cambria's ghosts, which sit in rocking chairs on front porches or Tubbtown ghosts which probably are to be found only in saloons, Newcastle's ghosts go about carrying lanterns.

The field of their operations is three miles from Newcastle on what the natives call the Morrissey Road. In this area balls of light are said to streak across the ground like illuminated tumbleweeds. The first reports of them were brought to Newcastle in 1941 by a tourist who had driven off the road to avoid meeting one. The tourist was found to be sober and a local policeman rode out to investigate. He said he had seen the lights but at a distance. Since that time there have been numerous verifications of the tourist's story but, apparently, the lights are never on display whenever any considerable group of spectators gather to look at them at one time.

Recently there have been no reports of them and some ghost-light experts, such as filling-station attendants, think that they have gone away for good. That, of course, is a possibility that ought to be seriously considered. On the other hand it doesn't pay to leap to conclusions—not in this territory.

# CHAPTER 39

## LANDS THAT TIME FORGOT

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THE BLACK HILLS—*The Black Hills Country is the richest hundred miles square in the world.*

—MARVIN HUGHITT

*The Black Hills offer the greatest variety of scenery in the smallest space of any spot on earth.*

—STEWART EDWARD WHITE

QUITE aside from such celebrated examples as the Shrine of Democracy and the steles of Wild Bill, Calamity Jane and Preacher Smith, the Hills have been lavish in the erection of memorials. There is a marker to Judge Granville G. Bennett near what used to be Sheridan; an obelisk in Dead Man's Gulch near Sturgis to the honor of Reddy Nolin, pony-express rider; a bronze statue of Homestake superintendent James T. Grier in Lead; a tower on a mountaintop near Deadwood to preserve the fame of Theodore Roosevelt; cairns from Sundance to French Creek to commemorate the passage of General George Armstrong Custer. And down near Hot Springs is a red sandstone statue keeping green the memory of A. C. McDonald, concerning which there should be a lot more publicity.

A. C. McDonald and his wife came into the Hills with the earliest immigrants and started a miners' boardinghouse somewhere on Spring Creek. Later they ran a forty-room hotel at Keystone reputed to be the "finest and most modern hotel in the Black Hills"—which it probably was. During this period of his career—when the Holy Terror was booming and Battle Creek Gulch was the rendezvous point for the smartest people (it is alleged) in the West—Mr. McDonald achieved what should have been lasting fame by the invention of the king's size lazy Susan. Some details of this device have been given elsewhere in this chronicle, but, just as a reminder, we may repeat that it was a sort of round table only slightly smaller in diameter than another round table

on top of which it revolved. One might suspect, of course, that the stone statue was erected to further the fame of the great inventor. But it comes as a shock to discover that he is even more celebrated for something else.

It seems that he was the explorer and developer—if not the actual discoverer—of Wind Cave, now the principal feature of Wind Cave National Park.

There are several legends about the early history of this remarkable spot. One of the most generally credited is that Tom Bingham, a Black Hills pioneer, came hunting deer in the high valley north of the present city of Hot Springs in 1881 and heard a whistling sound in a rocky ravine. Another account tells of some cowboys who noticed a mysterious blast of air coming from the underbrush. At any rate somebody found a hole in the ground with a cold fresh wind issuing from it. He squeezed through and so discovered the only cavern of its kind thus far opened up in the United States. McDonald and his brother had explored nearly a mile of passages when the government took the place over in 1903 as a national park.

Wind Cave is remarkable in its "box work" formations, stone honeycombs and frozen cobwebs which repeat themselves in endless variety through the maze of galleries and are found nowhere else in the world. They were formed by a calceous solution which solidified in the crack patterns of dry earth long since disappeared.

The strong currents of air that blow alternately in and out of the old entrance, giving the cave its name, are caused by variations in barometric pressure outside. When the barometer falls the wind blows out. When it rises the wind blows in. The temperature in the cave is constant at forty-seven degrees.

Government surveyors estimate the total extent of the passages at something more than ten miles but only two levels have been explored. A guided trip requires one or two hours depending on the route taken. Progress is steadily and sometimes steeply downward to a chamber at journey's end where the floor is about three-hundred-fifty feet below the surface of the earth. From this point the return to the upper air is made quickly by electric elevator.

The cave lies in the great Paha-Sapa limestone formation as do all the other caves in the Black Hills. Counting Gothic Cave near Newcastle, Wyoming, and the little-known Ice Cave near Rodgers' Well in the limestone district there are ten of these places aside from the national park. Sometimes you wonder if there are really ten or only one vast, unex-

plored labyrinth with ten entrances. But whatever their connection, or lack of it, Wind Cave looks like none of them.

There are no stalactites or stalagmites here, few bright crystalline formations save a little patch of quartz flowers so fragile that they have to be fenced off from the rest of the exhibits. The amazing geometrical figures of the box formations are pinkish or white with a vague hint of yellow in it. But you don't notice the colors when they are in front of you or feel the loss of them when they are gone. What catches the eye in this cave is form which starts out with the regularity of fancy masonry and changes as continuously and abruptly as the falling lines in a kaleidoscope. As a background to all this are walls and ceilings covered with a dull crystalline frostwork of rare and delicate beauty.

Outside the cave is a game preserve well populated with buffalo and antelope. The herds of Wind Cave Park and Custer State Park on the north make up the largest collection of bison anywhere on earth.

Crystal Cave, on the rim of Elk Creek Canyon between Piedmont and Telford, was discovered in the eighties and is fairly well known to most people in the northern Hills although for many years nothing was done to exploit it. As late as 1910 or 1911 you rode from Piedmont to the end of the Homestake narrow-gauge spur in Elk Creek, then climbed up to the top of the cliff and wheedled a rancher into showing you the "Jeweled Grotto," "Great White Throne," "Grand Ball Room" (or whatever they called the places) by lantern light.

This was the first of these glittering mazes to come under the public eye in the Black Hills and considering the unbroken masses of crystalline deposit it is probable that nothing so spectacular had yet been seen in the United States. One whole chamber was stripped of stalagmites and stalactites and brilliant stone flowers to make up an exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. For several years afterward there was a piece of this crystal on virtually every whatnot in the Middle West.

A road was built up the hill from Elk Creek after the First World War and the cave was equipped with duckboards, guard rails and electric light. For several years more it was the showplace of its class in western South Dakota. Then other hunters and trappers and ranchers and fishermen began to find odd holes in the ground leading to glittering audience chambers and gem-walled galleries.

There are now plenty of them, from Jewel Cave, the national monument on Hell's Canyon near Custer, to the amazing group ranged about Rapid City. You don't have to go very far anywhere in the southern

Hills to find buried palaces straight out of the *Arabian Nights*. And when you consider the outlay for lights, ramps and road building before the hopeful owner could collect a single fifty-cent piece for a ticket, these gem-lined prospect holes represent a staggering investment. . . . We shan't even mention the cost for advertising.

During the period of cave exploitation when the east slope of the Hills began to look like a collander, nature—or something—provided compensation. In direct ratio as more caves came into the market, more tourists came into the Hills. But how far that sort of adjustment can go, no man can say.

Despite the fact that most of the old prospectors and some of the new ones have become professional speleologists, not too much is known of the region's buried secrets. When you see Spring Creek with a fine head of water in the Stratosphere Bowl and dry as a bone twelve miles farther on as it passes Highway 16, you know it has gone somewhere to make stalactites and stalagmites but you don't know how or why. When you ride horseback over the hill a mile east of Beulah, Wyoming, your horse's hoofbeats sound like tom-toms and all the world seems hollow—as it probably is. You have located a cave, brother, but you don't know where. Most of the underground workings currently visited by tourists have been opened for years but I doubt if any one of them has been completely explored. It seems to me that every cavern hunter since Theseus has gone into the dark tunnels with some kind of dim light and a ball of string.

His discoveries and the string play out at the same time.

Once in bumping down the corridors of time through Wind Cave I was entertained—along with the rest of the party—by a woman who had been to Carlsbad Caverns. So she was taking a dim view of chambers less than three hundred feet wide and a hundred and fifty feet high.

"I have been through most of the caves in the Hills," she said about the time her exhausted audience reached the elevator, "and I have been terribly disappointed. Why, in all this region, couldn't there be a place like Carlsbad?"

And the patient ranger looked at her gravely.

"Madame," he inquired, "how do you know there isn't?"

That, of course, is the answer: how does anybody know what's beyond the spot where the explorer ran out of string? Holes deeper than the imagination of man, like the one Richard Corle told about in *Desert Country* . . . vaulted abysses that would contain a skyscraper, like Carls-



bad's great entry chamber . . . crystal forests and shining mountains miles down in the silent nether world? It is a fascinating research. One can understand how men like Floyd Collins give their lives to it.

Some time ago a friend of ours called in an excavator to make a hole for a septic tank in the rock near his home in Rapid Canyon. There came an old miner with pick and drills and dynamite. But first he tested the area with a crowbar.

"Can't tell what this stuff is till we get all the moss off it," he said. "Looks like limestone—it's soft."

He lifted the crowbar and drove it point down with all his weight in the blow. Then he jumped back, white-faced. The bar had disappeared through the rock. Long afterward a dull *clunk* came up from below.

The householder moved back to town. The old miner has quit the septic-tank business and has gone in for the life of a troglodyte investigating holes of all varieties between the Rapid Canyon cave belt and the limestone plateau. He has a theory that there is a sort of crystal-walled subway completely through the hills.

"Some day," he told us, "I'm going to go into Stage Barn Caverns and come out in Jewel Cave."

"The distance," we mentioned, "is about sixty miles as the crow flies."

"I'll take my lunch," he said.

It seems a long leap from sunken grottoes to stone pillars sticking up thousands of feet in the air. But call it the kinship of contrast or what you like, they are quite likely to be associated in memory. Together they represent the ultimate play of fantasy in a fantastic region.

The Indians had a legend about three maidens (or seven) who were gathering wild flowers when chased by a ferocious bear. (You may hear variants of this but the chief characters don't change much except in numbers and geography.) The little girls leaped on a boulder and cried out to the gods for help. So the gods made the rock higher and higher as the bear kept jumping up after them. The climax came when the bear in one final effort fell backward and broke his neck. The rock remained just as the gods had put it there with vertical flutings on the sides gouged out by the bear's slipping claws.

The little girls, in one version of the tale, plaited their flowers into a rope with which they descended to the plain. According to the report in which seven maidens were involved the rock got out of control and rose so high that they were pushed into the sky where they may still be seen as the Seven Sisters or Pleiades.

That this odd event happened in two places a hundred miles apart is hardly surprising if it happened at all. There may have been some good reason why little girls picking flowers should have been beset by bears so repetitiously. Anyway the miraculous uplifts are here. Either one of them would be an endless puzzle to geologists, but there are two of them very similar except for their raw materials and the forces used to get them out of the bears' clutches—which ought to make them twice as puzzling. Not the least strange thing about them is that the Indians called them both by virtually the same name, Mato Paha or Bear Mound.

Bear Butte, twelve miles west of Sturgis, retains its title and looks as if it ought to keep its legendary status as well. It rises something like a thousand feet from the prairie, a misty cone that seems ready to float away. Sometimes, with a storm behind it, it is blue and ominous, a silhouette as sharp and flat-looking as if it had been cut out of cardboard. Sometimes the sunlight covers it with delicate pastels and clouds drape it with feathery shreds. But always it is the dominant feature of the landscape save for the ridge of the haunted mountains miles to the west.

Save for its massive size one might well mistake it for a bit of the Bad Lands gone far astray. But the Bad Lands peaks and mesas are carved out of shale while Bear Butte is a lump of granite—one of the largest single lumps of granite one is likely to see in a lifetime. The carving in both cases has been done by erosion which leads the geologists to call it a "bathylith" or "batholith"—defined by the *Century Dictionary* as "a large mass of deep-seated igneous rock which may have been exposed through erosion. The texture is granitoid and the shape indefinite." It is very nearly a mile wide at the base and has a fairly gentle slope. In the summertime donkeys make regular trips to its summit, which has an altitude of 4,422 feet and it presents a view covering the West River country almost to Pierre.

The second Mato Tipi, which is taller and grander, stands out of the Wyoming plains west of Spearfish about sixty-three miles. This Bear Lodge is now called, for no particular reason, the Devil's Tower.

The Wyoming state guidebook calls it the most conspicuous geological feature of the Black Hills region, which it definitely is. Although it does not rise above the prairie much higher than Bear Butte, it has a narrower silhouette, greater symmetry and a sharper outline which make it more starkly visible from greater distances, a scarcely believable monolith of granite. It rises about 1,200 feet above the Belle Fourche River topping a ridge 600 feet high. The total height above sea level is 5,260

feet. It is roughly in the shape of a truncated cone with an elliptical top varying from 60 to 100 feet in diameter. The diameter at the base is about 50 per cent greater above the flare which is roughly 1,500 feet wide.

Close at hand it seems to be built of a number of fluted columns rounded at the top and flaring at the bottom. From a distance this configuration gives it the appearance of a gigantic petrified tree stump.

The material of the great pillar is phonolite, a granitic rock which gives out a ringing sound when a slab of it is struck.

Although it seems to be completely independent of the world around it, geologists ascribe the formation of the tower to the Black Hills uplift twenty million years ago. It was a laccolith, they say, a bubble in the up-boiling lava whose quick cooling formed prismatic columns around the sides. Most of these are pentagonal although erosion during several million years has rounded them.

The Devil's Tower area—1,153 acres—was made a national monument, the first in the country, by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. Choppy roads made it hard to get to but since it became a stop on the north route from the Black Hills to Yellowstone Park it has attracted thousands of tourists.

Once a year, generally sometime around the Fourth of July, it is the scene of an Old Settlers' Picnic, better known as a "bullwhackers' convention." The features of the program are a storytelling period, a break-neck rodeo in which the only horses taking part are broncs that have never been ridden before, and a bullwhackers' whip-cracking contest, a demonstration of techniques now almost vanished.

Two side trips from the administration building are listed by the Federal park service. There is a horse trail leading six miles northwest to Missouri Buttes from which it is possible to look at the tower from its best perspective and also to get a good view of the Belle Fourche Valley and Schoolmarm Lake. The second trip is a distinct novelty—a prairie-dog town kept intact for visitors. This is probably the only spot left in the West where a prairie dog can be assured of a welcome.

Ranchers were out in this district early in 1876. After them came hunters in large numbers and an occasional prospector. But it wasn't until 1893 that anybody thought about getting on top of the tower. In June of that year Bill Rogers who was running cattle in the neighborhood advertised that he would make the ascent on July 4. Despite the fact that there was no transportation except saddle horses and a few wagons virtually everybody in the north end of the Hills

seems to have turned out for the performance. The Devil's Tower was about seventy miles from the nearest point in South Dakota. Nevertheless local tradition declares that "several thousand people" gathered to see Rogers make his attempt.

There is far too little about Rogers in the records. Either he had had some early experience in mountain climbing or he had a natural genius for it. He pounded oak pegs into cracks in the wall as he went up, making a virtual ladder on the face of the tower to within two hundred feet of the crest. He got down safely, presumably to the disappointment of the crowd that had come so far to see him break his neck.

His wife went up to the top a few days later and for something like thirty-five years was the only woman who ever did. Other amateur mountain climbers made the ascent without mishap but there were enough narrow escapes to convince the rangers that the feat was getting to look too easy. They pulled out the first sixty feet of Rogers' pegs and forbade unauthorized climbing.

One genius whose name we have no difficulty forgetting parachuted from a rented plane to the rock in 1941. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time. He was marooned without food or water for three or four days until an experienced climber went up and got him.

When a member of the Pioneers' Association speaks of "yesterday in the Black Hills," he means the day he arrived in 1876. When a geologist who has been here long enough to look around speaks of yesterday he means from twenty to fifty million years ago.

The Black Hills range is said to be the oldest on the face of the earth, and some spots such as hoary old Harney Peak look like it. Rapid City is proud of its novel conceit in parading cement copies of prehistoric beasts on its sky line. But nobody has to copy the fossil remains of shellfish that strew the highest mountaintop in the district.

Geological freaks are so commonplace here that nobody recognizes them as freakish. There are springs in Cold Springs Canyon that run at a temperature of eight degrees above freezing in the middle of summer. There are streams, such as Fall River that run at ninety-four degrees in winter. Down toward Edgemont you can find remnants of tree ferns that were some of the earliest specimens of plant life on this earth. Anywhere between Hot Springs and Belle Fourche are little trickles of water that cut gashes hundreds of feet deep from one side of the mountains to the other. A calendar is an obscenity when you begin to talk about the Stratosphere Bowl that Spring Creek contrived so

patiently out of its endless leisure. If you take away a grain of sand every now and then for fifty millions of years you finish up with a badly worn mountain.

And that, of course, is what the Hills are, some worn old mountains whose peaks have been flattened down a few thousand feet in just a few score million years of standing still. The Hills came up and shook themselves and stood for a long time in vanishing waters that flowed sluggishly toward the great sea somewhere near where the Gulf of Mexico is now. . . . There were weird animals about to die in the mud to the east and to be buried in the astounding sepulture of the Bad Lands. But before that the feet of Harney rested on a beach beyond which the tides rolled out to horizons no man had ever seen. . . .

There was a beach along U. S. Highway No. 14 north with ginkgo trees and banyans and fromageres and the like pushing back in a dense forest up the east slope of a rising new land. The middle of this growth was somewhere around Piedmont. There were other patches of woods, wherever trees could get a foothold along the shore line. But this tangle of jungle along the North Western's right of way, seems to have been the largest and densest.

Geologists can point out many water lines along the fronts of the Black Hills as we know them at the moment. They seem to a layman to have lived in a state of constant turmoil and indecision. They had stuck their heads out of the water and they had stayed high and dry long enough to gather a thickly matted permanent covering of verdure, including trees three and four feet in diameter and from sixty to seventy feet high. Then they sank back again.

They didn't go so far down this time as they had been before—only a couple of hundred feet, perhaps; enough, at least, to submerge the Piedmont beach along with half a dozen other forest-covered beaches. The watery shore line moved inland, rolling up sand ahead of it and dropping its loot of marine life for hundreds of thousands of years. The ancient trees, flattened and waterlogged, lay submerged in the deepening silt while silicates in solution slowly replaced their original substance. And then, in some fashion, the Hills came up again.

There is a ridge about a mile east of No. 14 running north and south from Rapid to beyond Sturgis forming the last barrier between the Hills and the prairie country. It is not very spectacular to look at and since the first coming of the white man it has been considered useless for farming. William Boylon, when he got a large chunk of it along with a

good agricultural homestead near Black Hawk in 1880, merely took the bad with the good. It was something virtually nobody bothered to look at for some fifty years. About that time his son Edward Boylon came home and walked one evening through the timber along the top of the ridge. When he came down he went to Rapid City to consult with Professor C. C. O'Harra and others of the faculty at the School of Mines. After which the Boylons looked upon farming as a minor interest.

You can still see the sign they put up east of the highway and just north of Stage Barn Canyon. You can follow the modern version of the trail they built back to the ridge and climb an expensively engineered switchback to the top and then you can get the same sort of surprise that Edward Boylon got when you look out over one of the largest petrified forests in the United States.

This, of course, is the ancient bay about which the ginkgo trees grew in the dawn of the world. Its shore line, picked up out of the water after millions on millions of years, is now a couple of hundred feet above the floor of the valley. Its beach is now a gently sloping expanse of green farmland. And new trees that bear no resemblance to early plant forms mark the curve of its one-time high-water mark. Scattered among these growing trunks are literally hundreds of trees turned to stone aeons before there was a human being to walk in their shade.

Only in the Black Hills could such a place as this remain unnoticed for fifty years. Only the prospectors were concerned with rock and only gold-bearing rock concerned the prospector. There are hundreds of people in this region today who have never even heard of the existence of such an exhibit—thousands who drive past every day under the impression that this is another salesbooth for agate paperweights. Most of the natives have learned somewhere, as I did, that the petrified wood displayed in the Black Hills comes from somewhere around Interior in the Bad Lands in chunks possibly two inches square. One friend, whom I shall obviously refrain from naming, made a trip to Arizona right after the war just to take a look at a "real petrified forest." One recalls the old story of the mule that starved to death because he had a stiff neck and couldn't turn his head far enough to see a stack of hay.

The sign which marks the road to this prehistoric Lido doesn't do much to lure the searchers after better mousetraps. It bears the legend—or did—"Timber of Ages—Two Miles." And such a label gets no reaction at all from a traveler who has come to look askance at local rock piles and noncommittal signs.

Once you get on top of the ridge you find a well-stocked museum of

petrified wood specimens from all over the world and the show begins to look better. A guide takes you out over a part of the old beach and through a network of pathways over and around scores of these fallen stone logs. Some of them are three feet or more in diameter. One or two specimens exposed by mining methods along the side of the slope are visible for fifty feet of their length and may be longer.

The beauty of this place to one who has seen the tumbled logs on the Arizona desert lies in the fact that it is still a forest green and growing, a forest of trees believed to be similar to those lying prostrate in this waterless bay. There is showmanship in the arrangement of the paths that lead you from isolated pieces to whole trunks, and then whole groves and finally a vista of wide, empty distances beyond a dense intermingling of greenery and agate. This, truly, is the land that time forgot.

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## INFORMATION PIECE VIII

# *Black Hills Playhouse*

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For the past two or three years the theater has come to compete with the scenic attractions and other lures of the Black Hills and at the moment seems well established. It seems almost impossible.

The stage, with some local embellishments, was quite popular in Deadwood and Rapid City in the days of the pioneers. Deadwood's old Gem Theater until it burned down in the 1900's had an international reputation. It was there, or maybe at Langrishe's or McDaniels' that *The Mikado* set a long-standing record for 130 consecutive performances. But the coming of the moving pictures changed things in the Hills as everywhere else. And when somebody opened up the Black Hills Playhouse near Legion Lake he must have had some misgivings. The status of "plays with actors in them" was something nobody could predict.

It is odd that some of the best acting in America should be presented in a badly identified clearing in a national forest in South Dakota. But there you are.

One of the things that makes this theater different from the old red-barn amateur performances is that it is strictly professional. Except for supernumeraries and bit players everybody in every cast is an experienced actor earning his living through an active connection with the drama. Not all of these people are currently appearing in public. In fact most of them are in the drama departments of colleges and universities as professors and instructors. But their acting has a finished excellence that you seldom see nowadays anywhere but in the big cities, and there not very often.



Their best production last year was *The Legend of Devil's Gulch*, an historical fantasy by Dr. Warren M. Lee, who started the Black Hills Playhouse in 1946 and has guided it ever since. The play had to do basically with the Black Hills gold rush and the adventures, recalled in somebody's dream, of Peewee Pribble, the man who discovered gold and never could find it again. Shorn of all dramaturgy it was a somewhat embellished but familiar diary of local legend. Its charm lay in the author's ability to compress time and contrast or oppose one event with another no matter when they had happened. Its startling effectiveness lay in his gift for presenting dream sequences within dream sequences within dream sequences and maintaining complete clarity.

The net result of this technique was that the pageant of the gold rush didn't go by, as parades do. It remained with the beholder, as his impressions do. Nothing was static. Nothing in all the story of the stampede moved slower than a pistol shot but nothing got away from you. There were thirty-two actors in the cast but presently it seemed that there might be a thousand. And by the time the curtain went down on Deadwood it wasn't something that you were looking at but something you were in, not something out of the past or out of the future but out of the right here, now. . . .

Maybe this bit of drama review has no place here. Dr Lee and William R. Morgan, technical director, and Gladys Carlson, Hap Haberman and Bruce Jewell, the leads, seem to be impermanent in a tent theater. People who can contrive plays like *The Legend of Devil's Gulch* have a definite future. But anyway, somebody ought to thank them for what they've done so far.

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# CHAPTER 40

## THE HANDS ARE OFF THE CLOCK

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*And so, as the golden sun is sinking in the west, we bid farewell to old Paha-Sapa—the Land of Charm. . .*

*—From a Travelogue in Technicolor.*

HAVING traveled from Belle Fourche to Hot Springs, and from Kadoka to the Devil's Tower, it would seem that, so far as mere *space* is concerned, we have fairly well traversed the Black Hills. It remains only to consider them in *time*. And that is more difficult.

Even though you may ride for a couple of hours without getting out from under the awesome domination of Harney Peak, even though Inyan Kara may still toss its flowers through Cold Springs Canyon as it did in the path of Custer, even though the little marks that the railroads made may have disappeared from Spearfish Canyon and Rapid Creek, and the Needles continue to look much like their picture on a nickel post card—despite all of this, the Eternal Hills are always changing.

Each time you ride from Rapid City to Custer—though you do it every day for a year—you marvel at the masses of new color, the strange perspectives, the unfamiliar outlines of spire and pinnacle that rise from what seem to be the old horizons. Every time you follow a new trail out into the wilderness of the western slope you turn about to discover a range of mountains that you never saw before. The Hills in the sunlight or in the scudding shadow of broken clouds are never quiet. They are never the same today any more than they were when the Great Manitou brooded over them. But *time*, as you discover it in this strange bourne, seems repetitive—almost monotonous. What should be the ephemera, the Johnny-Come-Latelys, of this old Sioux Paradise alone have permanence. The people, like the old soldiers of the doggerel, never die.

You may regret the passing of the Scott Davises, the Heberts, Jack Langrishes, Wyatt Earps, Wild Bills, Frank Evanses, Tom Sweeneys and similar personages of the days that are theoretically gone. But, if

you have eyes to look about, you never will find any reason for thinking them unique.

The gold rush ends, and the stalwarts that it brought out from Iowa and Ohio and Illinois (and Singapore and Gibraltar and St. Petersburg) find their way one by one to a resting place on one or another of the region's Boot Hills. But the streets never seem to be less congested.

The first statue over the grave of Wild Bill Hickok had been chiseled to bits, and the technicians of the Deadwood assay office had learned to play four kinds of solitaire when what was called a new era slid around in 1915. The parades of cowpokes and their sad-eyed horses had disappeared from the scene in Rapid City. It might have seemed to single-minded historians that the ancient characters, the old familiar faces, were gone forever. But no native of these parts would ever have fallen into such error. . . . The more things change, the more they are the same.

When one great traditional figure died another great traditional figure—or at least the raw material for one—was already stepping into his place. And only an expert in the fauna of the district could have detected the difference. You never got the idea at any time, in looking over the seventy years of western South Dakota's history, that there was any tendency toward inertia. In lean years as well as in fat, the old pioneer towns somehow kept out of the doldrums. As in 1876 the people were always ambitious, always in motion, always looking at something beyond the horizon. They reminded you somehow of Lorado Taft's great sculpture, "The March of Time"—that weird concept in which Time is standing aloof and motionless while the human race passes in review endlessly from cradle to grave. They are still marching.

What you look at in Deadwood or Custer today may be only the road company with a show whose original cast was performing in 1876. But the lines don't seem to have been altered much. And the performance is continuous.

When the prospectors and stage drivers and frontier marshals had gone there was still Frank Lockhart who gave Rapid City a strong arm and a vitriolic tongue in the interests of political reform, and spent much of his time trying to put the hex on Judge Levi McGee with a hypnotic eye.

There was Dr. V. T. McGillicuddy who came back from the Indian wars to take the presidency of the South Dakota School of Mines.

And maintaining the romance of the gold rush we always had the McCurdy brothers who panned a little gold up near Pactola and en-

gaged in a sort of silent war with the Dakota Power Company. The company was a great corporation with tremendous resources. The McCurdys had nothing but a few loads of hay, which may or may not have been the same hay that every now and then fell into the power company's flumes and put the Rapid City plant out of business. Anyway, the McCurdys won the argument, whatever it was. Nobody was surprised.

As such sprightly figures moved on one became aware of others. For a while we had El Comanche (the spelling is his own) who theoretically gave away a million dollars because he thought money a nuisance and paid ten thousand for a secondhand Franklin automobile because he thought it wasn't.

Contemporaneously on the scene was George Senn, one of the earliest of the experimenters in chain journalism. At one time his string of newspapers was longer than that of any other publisher in the United States, including W. R. Hearst. His publications weren't very large, perhaps, but they were numerous. He had one in every town and hamlet and at every crossroads in the Bad Lands, most of them printed on presses that might have been borrowed from the Smithsonian Institution. They weren't very newsy, come to think about it. They consisted mostly of patent insides that his local staff frequently forgot to change from one week to another. He had no commercial advertising and, so far as can be learned, no circulation. But he had a keen eye for business. The publication of land-office notices and such legal information was the source of a fine income for many years.

We had—and still have—Al Nystrom who, in earlier days, was a financier at Wall, South Dakota. He acquired considerable fame at the time of the great moratorium because his bank was the only one open in the United States. Nobody, it appears, had thought to bring the bad news to Wall.

More recently there was George Bronson, the celebrated press agent who brought the stratosphere flight to the Hills under the impression that it required plenty of prairie, and who located the Strato-bowl when he found out differently. And after that came Paul Bellamy, previously mentioned, who went to London to offer the United Nations a permanent home in the Hills . . . But the cycle is unending. Only a few months ago a young man in Pierre sent a message to Joe Stalin, inviting him to come out to the West River country and hunt a few pheasants. The people of this region, one gathers, are born with a gift for meeting situations or, as one biased observer put it, "the world's greatest capacity

for the unthinkable." There is no dearth of them at the moment and a new crop will be along day after tomorrow.

The Old West doesn't die. It may find existence a bit of a struggle in some of the shack towns and ballyhoo that greet you along the highway. But there are compensations. The soda dispensers and hamburger merchants don't find it necessary to wear spurs and ten-gallon hats at their work. And such spots as Custer continue to thrive in an atmosphere that has persisted through the years.

It is quite likely that Custer and Crook and Harney and John Brennan and Father De Smet and all the other characters in the pageant of the Hills could come back to any part of the mountains outside the cities and be conscious of little change—except for one thing: the Indians. They could not mistake the evidence—nor can we—that in this one respect the time stream has flowed on unchecked. Yesterday the Sioux were a vital part of the drama of the West. Today they are a few unhappy-looking figures in dungarees who loiter on the street corners. Tomorrow, no matter how diligently the white man continues to live his own folklore, they will be gone to the bourne where the old Seventh Cavalry has preceded them.

One phase of the Black Hills story came to an end on the morning of December 29, 1890, at Wounded Knee Creek, ten or eleven miles northeast of Pine Ridge Station. . . .

Wovoka, a Paiute from Walker's Lake, Nevada, had been telling of his revelations and promoting the ghost dance. He had talked with the spirits of dead braves and had learned how the dead Indians were planning to rise up and aid the living in a great—and final—battle against the whites. Rightly or wrongly rumor had named Sitting Bull as the high priest of Wovoka's dangerous cult. He was sitting quietly at his home on Grand River but when, about the end of November 1890, the Sioux began to gather along the Cheyenne River, it was decided to arrest him.

The Indian police were ordered to go to Sitting Bull's village. They arrived there early in the morning of December 15 followed by Captain E. C. Fechet and a hundred troopers with a Hotchkiss gun.

Four of the Indian police found the chief still asleep, made him get up and dress and led him out of the house. His warriors, most of them armed, came rushing out of their lodges, and Sitting Bull called on them for help. Lieutenant Bull Head, of the police, was wounded in the first volley, but as he fell he put two bullets into Sitting Bull who dropped

dead alongside him. The great Hunkpapa's body was buried at Standing Rock Agency in a grave half filled with quicklime.

So Sitting Bull was gone—the last great, uncompromising enemy of the whites. The Sioux wars were just about over.

General Nelson A. Miles learned that many of Sitting Bull's people were riding south to join Big Foot on the Cheyenne and he ordered a major mobilization.

As word of the troop movement got around, Big Foot talked of peace, part of his force scattered, a thousand Oglalas came back to the Pine Ridge Reservation. But Big Foot, reinforced by the warriors from Standing Rock, moved into the Bad Lands on December 22 and prepared to fight. Three thousand cavalrymen began to close in on him.

The chief was discovered on December 28 by Major Whiteside of the Seventh Cavalry and tried to make terms.

Whiteside said there wouldn't be any terms. "You may take your pick," he said. "You will either surrender now or fight us at once." And Big Foot, weary and sick, agreed to surrender.

The cavalrymen herded the Indians along Wounded Knee Creek out of the Bad Lands mazes to a less-forbidding spot nearer Pine Ridge. The reported force of Sioux seemed to have dissolved. Big Foot's village, as the troopers moved it toward the reservation, numbered between two hundred and fifty and three hundred people, including old men, women and children.

At daybreak December 29 the rest of the Seventh Cavalry had come up under the command of Colonel J. W. Forsyth. The village was totally surrounded with four Hotchkiss guns mounted on the snowy slopes above the creek. The colonel ordered the Indians to surrender their arms, but his order could not be transmitted by Big Foot. The chief lay in his tepee nearly dead with pneumonia.

Major Whiteside rode among the lodges trying to make the braves understand what the colonel had said. The Indians were angry and probably only partly aware of what the major was talking about. Only a few of them turned over their rifles. Whiteside lost his temper and ordered squads of troopers into the tepees to search for arms.

In the middle of the village one Yellow Bird, a shaman and a ghost dancer, began to harangue the warriors to resist.

Up in Rapid City fifty-odd miles away, the commanding general sat in the bar of the Harney Hotel and considered the weather. The bliz-

zard had stopped but the wind was blowing gustily with icy pin points in it. The temperature was down somewhere around ten below zero. A bad day for the troops, not to mention the negligible Indians. But it wasn't at all uncomfortable here. . . . Just the right sort of headquarters for directing a war of movement against the savages. He looked at his watch—nine o'clock.

Yellow Bird, the medicine man, called on brave men to fight or die. He raised his hand. From somewhere in the camp—or maybe outside it—came a rifleshoot. The Seventh U. S. Cavalry rode down the slope for the kill.

Big Foot's braves were outnumbered four or five to one from the very beginning. The first short-range volley from the charging troopers killed half of them, and then the machine guns began to pour their fire promiscuously into the village. Some of the Indians escaped the closing ring for the moment by fleeing panic-stricken along the high-walled creek bed. The heritors of the Custer tradition roared after them. Some women and children were routed out and murdered three miles from the scene of what the army reports called "the engagement."

After three hours of this disorderly killing twenty-nine cavalymen were dead and thirty-three wounded. If there were any wounded Indians nobody bothered to find out—and as for the dead, there were at least three hundred and fifty. . . . How many more went into the common grave a few days later is something about which there probably will never be any more information. Some of the Sioux came according to custom and carried off the bodies of their relatives. Some wounded who escaped the field were probably frozen to death in the blizzard that descended that same night.

There was considerable turmoil after this affair, but all the indignation seems to have been on the part of the Indians. General Miles went into action—which is to say he tore himself out of his headquarters into the cold weather and ordered about eight thousand troops into the prairies around Pine Ridge to round up a thousand Brule warriors suspected of evil intent. This band, under Kicking Bear and Short Bull, had ambushed the heroes of Wounded Knee the day after the massacre but had retreated without a fight when the Ninth Cavalry (colored) had come unexpectedly over the hill.

General Miles preferred charges against Colonel Forsyth (who was released by the court-martial), but no one ventured to criticize the general, especially when everything came out all right. The Sioux, pretty

well convinced by now that there wasn't much to hope for in the intervention of spirit warriors or the protection of magic shirts, decided to give up and go back to the reservations. Miles was looked on as the great peace negotiator. He wrote a five-pound book on his career as a soldier, illustrated by Frederick Remington. As an autobiography it had one remarkable feature: It made no mention whatever of Wounded Knee. . . .

There are still some of the old chiefs left at Pine Ridge. The Indian school on the reservation has made some progress fostering a few of the old native arts and preserving the traditional dances. But the young people, thanks mostly to wars and military service, are getting a more cosmopolitan outlook. They are only loosely bound to the reservation as matters stand at present. Only a few opportunities for a decent practical education rise in the young Sioux's path to a new and modern world. The Indian's day as a curiosity or a historical specimen is getting along toward late twilight.

We will have to get along as best we can with those other picturesque figures of the frontier, the hardy pioneers of the gold camps who continue to reproduce their kind as if by hectograph. So far as they are concerned there is no calendar . . . there is no death.





# APPENDIX AND INDEX



## APPENDIX

### THE SIOUX FAMILY

*(Note to Chapter 1)*

Of this great federation the struggle for the Black Hills involved only the Tetons, the Prairie Sioux, whose subdivisions were five great tribes—Sans Arcs, Brules, Oglalas, Minneconjous and Hunkpapas. The Oglalas called themselves Dakotas or Lakotas, presumably just to make things more confusing.

The branch of the Sioux who rose under Little Crow against the settlers in Minnesota were the Santees. They took little individual part in the proceedings after they and sundry of their tribal connections had been pushed across the Missouri onto what was called the Great Reservation.

Red Cloud was an Oglala. So was Crazy Horse. Sitting Bull was a Hunkpapa.

### CUSTER'S LAST STAND

*(Note to Chapter 13)*

Of General George Armstrong Custer it remains necessary only to say that on June 25, 1876, he was impetuous, stubborn and overconfident, that he misjudged the strength of his enemy the Sioux on the Little Big Horn River, that he divided his command (the Seventh Cavalry), and that he and all the force under his immediate orders got wiped out. This was the finale of the parade he had started when he entered Floral Valley, at the edge of Paha-Sapa, in 1874.

It seems likely, now, that the eager Custer disobeyed the orders of General Terry in command of the expedition. It is fairly well established that Major Marcus Reno, ambushed in the spot to which he had been sent by Custer, was unable to send help and would have been destroyed with his own three companies had it not been for the timely arrival of Captain F. W. Benteen with the rear guard.

Custer may have been pigheaded but he was brave, although that was small consolation to the two hundred and seventy troopers who died with him. For some time the story circulated that he had committed

suicide. This was discredited by his foemen themselves. There was also much footless discussion about whether or not his body was mutilated. It probably was not.

"Last survivors of the Little Big Horn battle" furnished impressive obituaries for the press every now and then until a few years before the Second World War. But that does not change the fact that the only living thing found on the scene of Custer's last battle was Major Keogh's horse Comanche. There were survivors of Reno's engagement, or Benteen's, which were fought simultaneously with Custer's Armageddon, but on the opposite side of a river, out of touch and out of sight. Sergeant Charles P. Windolph, who lived for many years in Lead and provided Frazier Hunt with material for the book, *I Fought With Custer—The Story of the Last Survivor of the Little Big Horn*, was attached to Captain Benteen's troop.

Several Indians who had taken part in the fight were still alive in 1949.

#### JENNEY EXPEDITION

(Note to Chapter 15)

It is difficult to see how there could have been much misunderstanding over Custer's report of the finding of gold by Ross and McKay on French Creek. But anyway the government decided to make a check. Under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture Professor Walter P. Jenney of Columbia University came to the Hills in 1875 to make a mineral survey. He traveled with twenty officers, two companies of infantry, six companies of cavalry and a train of seventy-five wagons.

Commenting on the military escort in his report, he says:

"This large command, numbering full 400 men, would seem at first unnecessarily strong for the mere purpose of protecting from Indians those who were pursuing the investigation in the Hills. But the attitude of the Indians on the penetration of this, the most cherished part of their reservation, could not be foretold, and it was known that they had been not a little agitated by the invasions of General Custer in the previous year and by the subsequent visits and operations of miners."

As it turned out the Indians were no less agitated by the professor's advent, particularly when he employed numbers of outlawed miners to continue their digging and panning in the interests of science. Dr. V. T. McGillicuddy, later agent at Pine Ridge and president of the South Dakota School of Mines, accompanied the expedition.

Jenney found that the reports concerning the wealth of French Creek had been greatly exaggerated. But by the time he made his report to that effect in June 1875, nobody was listening.

## BLACK HILLS GOLD

*(Note to Chapter 17)*

The quaint little folkcrafts of the gold camps weren't very many and such as there were could claim no greater tenure on life than the sprightly characters who produced them. About all that survives in our day of the Sutter's Mill period of art is the gold nugget that Uncle Jim had made into a stick pin or the lump of polished ore that weighted down his watch chain.

The men who moiled for gold were for the most part practical men who weren't grubbing metal out of the ground to make jewelry out of it. When some of the stuff got back to the camps in the guise of medallions, buckles, necklaces and other trade goods from Sioux City or Omaha, the natives barely noticed its form in considering its substance. I bought a wedding ring once, in a little hole-in-the-wall shop in Deadwood across the street from the Bodega, a place that smelled like an assay office and looked like a magician's cabinet. The little old man who ran it had no talk about artistic design or fine workmanship or any of the other things that were almost a ritual in jewelry stores back where I came from. He didn't mention such things as carats because in that country anything under twenty-two carats wasn't gold. He didn't have much sentiment either.

I told him what size I wanted. So he fished a suitable specimen out of a cigar box and weighed it up on a miner's balance.

"This," he said, "is two and a third pennyweights at two dollars a pennyweight. . . ."

All things considered, most of the gold camps were a good deal alike. The yearning for cultural expression was probably just as great in one as in another and you'd wonder that creative inspiration or a yearning for beauty could have existed in any of them. Nevertheless, you may be surprised to learn, there were a few struggles toward a native art—some of which came a long way. The traces of one very creditable development are still to be seen throughout the Black Hills—and this is not due so much to any greater feeling for the beautiful here than elsewhere but merely because the old gold camps may have quieted a little but never really died.

Much of the world may know little or nothing about the annual production of the Homestake Mine and a lot of cultured people never heard of Calamity Jane. But there is hardly a teen-age girl in the country who cannot instantly recognize the varicolored grape and leaf design that is the badge of the Black Hills.

This motif has been the subject of many local legends, some of them pretty hard to bear. We may cite only one—the noble miner who was

dying of hunger and thirst in some gulch that he was presumably unable to walk out of. Then, of course, he spotted a bunch of grapes which had hitherto escaped his none-too-intelligent attention. He resolved to commemorate in gold this fine bunch of grapes that had saved his life, and eventually he did. This version is not so poetic as that of the late Alice Gossage but it will give you the general idea.

As a matter of fact the design of the red and green grapes most likely originated someplace where they had red and green grapes—not at Frank Conover's Ranch or wherever the legend said it was. It came to western South Dakota after having survived half a dozen gold booms and was far gone from its experimental stages when it arrived.

A. B. LaBau (or LeBeau), a St. Louis artisan, went out to California with the forty-niners and there he saw growing grapes and found out that some gold deposits have different colors from others. He began to put the grape design into trinkets for shipment to the old folks at home. And he did quite well at this business until the rush ended.

He, and a couple of goldsmiths who had joined up with him, went on to Pike's Peak and Cripple Creek and Idaho and Last Chance Gulch and Bannack. In each camp they repeated their design, not because of any prevalence of grapes in the vicinity but because they knew how to make it best and it gave them the chance to use varying shades of gold.

LaBau, Ed Kind and Joseph Heglund had been in business nearly thirty years when they brought their craft to Central City early in 1876. Within a few months they moved to Deadwood and formed a partnership with George Butler, another goldsmith. They closed out their share in the business in 1877 to Butler whose son joined him in 1881. Butler was president and active manager of the firm for more than fifty-one years.

LaBau, Kind and Heglund went somewhere else—but not to a new gold field. There weren't any new gold fields.

The golden grapes that lasted them through thirty years of changing styles and tastes still keep their memory bright in the Hills. It is now almost a hundred years since LaBau punched out his first grape in a shop near Sacramento. If he were to come back today and glance into a jeweler's window in Rapid City or Custer or Rushmore or Deadwood, he might mistake the displays for some of his original handiwork. The design, which has become as much a part of the Black Hills as Harney Peak, is not only immutable, it is also unchangingly and unfailingly attractive. It just goes on and on and on. . . .

#### CHINESE COLONY

#### (Note to Chapter 17)

In common with nearly all Western mining towns Deadwood for many years had a large Chinese colony. It was the custom of these

Oriental pioneers to work as gleaners in the streams below the gold camps. Working over the tailings with infinite care and boundless patience, they were able to pan out almost as much as the white prospector had taken in the first wash.

They were shrewd businessmen, peaceable and generally respected. They lived in a row of frame buildings along lower Main Street (near the present North Western freight depot) below the Gem and the Green Front and Number Ten and the Bella Union and other dives with which they appeared to be totally unconcerned. They ran restaurants and laundries, did odd labor, gambled and speculated in gold mines. Many of them got rich. All of them seemed to be making a decent living and their houses improved with the years. They had status in the community. Their volunteer hose company was widely admired.

But they lost faith in the Black Hills when Deadwood's silver boom in the nineties played out. A few of them lingered after that, but the remaining ones gradually slipped away during the First World War and today there is not a single Chinese in the Hills.

## PLACE NAMES

### (Note to Chapter 17)

The nomenclature of the Western mining camps was always striking because it had imagination, not to say imagery. The name Deadwood was primarily practical because it was descriptive, something that would single it out. It is seldom in this region that you find such names as "Newcastle" and "Cambria" beyond the invention of which no coal miner ever gets. The Black Hills may not have gathered up the best names in the world. But at any rate it got variety:

*Nemo* was so titled by a miner who thought it a good omen when a lump of quartz rolled down the hill in front of him. To keep from changing his luck when he named the claim he turned the omen backward.

*Roubaix* was once known as Perry, but Pierre Wibeaux, who acquired the principal mines in the district, was homesick for his old home town in France.

Some oddly titled places were named for their founders:

*Murdo* is sometimes thought to have a sinister significance. But it is part of the name of Murdo Mackenzie, once manager of the Matador Ranch so named because the word had something to do with bulls.

*Moon*—not for a celestial body but for Jack Moon.

*Whitewood* took its name from birch and aspen trees in the vicinity.

*Caputa* is derived from *caput*, L., "head or capital."

*Hermosa* is, in Spanish at least, "beautiful."

*Fairburn* seems to have been a working contraction of Fair Bourne.



*Hill City* was the best the pioneers could do with the geographical location.

*Keystone* was so christened in honor of a Masonic watch charm.

The Indians contributed some musical terminology still in use: *Wi-wi-la-ka-ta* (Hot Springs), *Minne-kahta* (Hot Water), *Paha-Sapa* (Black Hills), *Makoo-Sitcha* (Bad Lands), *Inyan Kara* (Mountain Within a Mountain) and others. Signal Mountain, Lookout Mountain, War Bonnet, Sheep Mountain, Cedar Pass, Buffalo, Custer, Sturgis, Sheridan, Silver City and Rockerville are more obvious.

*Mystic* is also mysterious. Nobody seems to know how it got its name.

*Galena* was named for the type of ore found in the vicinity.

*Piedmont*, of course, was the foot of the mountain.

*Buffalo Gap* was named by the Indians who discovered the pass through which the buffalo moved in and out of the Hills.

*Lame Johnny Creek* and *Horsethief Park* (Creek, Lake) get their names from Lame Johnny, lynched in 1878.

*Pactola* from Pactolus, river of golden sands, in Lydia.

*Crow Peak* is a partial translation of an Indian name meaning Mountain Where Many Crows (Indians) Were Killed.

*Spearfish* derives from an Indian legend about a boy who speared fish.

Much picturesque nomenclature came from the yearning of hard-bitten men for homes, friends, sweethearts: *The Homestake*, *Old Pal*, *Friendly Gulch*, *Old Betsey*, *Clara Belle* and *Holy Terror*. There are evidences of strange memories and little else in some of the names given to mines: *Rattle Snake Turk*, *Two Deuces*, *Hard Nut*, *Grizzly Bear*, *Bad Whiskey* and *Dizzy*.

And the natural humor of the prospectors is responsible for other titles that seem likely to last as long as the Hills.

*Two-Bit Gulch*, near Deadwood, is still so designated on the Forestry Department's maps, because seventy years ago Jim Brody and Jum Terry, prospectors, announced that every day they worked the diggings there they were "two bits worse off."

*Lightning Creek* needed some explanation until an old-timer wrote a note to Mr. McGaghey at the Adams Museum: "If you'd ever lived there in a thunderstorm, you wouldn't need to ask."

*Hell's Canyon*, one is reliably informed, was "just hell to get across."

*Shirt-tail Canyon* was once the home of an unnamed miner whose beautiful daughter had a suitor who, believe it or not, was accustomed to sing songs outside her window. The canyon got its name one night when the tone-deaf father pursued the young man with a shotgun, wearing just whatever he happened to have on at the time.

Virtually all the Black Hills names have a definite meaning in connection with the places to which they are applied, *Laughing Water*, *Kicking Horse*, *War Bonnet Peak*, although such appellations as *Rifle*

*Pit, File Closer* and *Minnie Ball* may be no nearer than memories of forgotten Civil War veterans. But the old-timers will tell you that if you see a name with modern connotations—such as *Airport Creek* or *Night Club Road*—you may be sure the place was previously called something else. Thus *Grace Coolidge Creek* was originally called *Squaw Creek* because squaws congregated there. *Mount Coolidge* was originally *Sheep Mountain*.

## WILD BILL

(Note to Chapter 18)

It is a long time now since Deadwood has seen a copy of what was once considered Captain Jack Crawford's greatest poem. Published in the *Pioneer* sometime in the eighties, it was later reprinted "on heavy paper suitable for framing" with an ornamental border depicting scenes from James Butler Hickok's life. Most critics thought that the piece was ornamental enough without any pictorial decorations, but anyway it was widely sold and widely displayed in Black Hills homes for many years. Now it is a collector's item, as well it might be.

*Wild Bill's Grave*

BY

CAPTAIN JACK CRAWFORD  
THE POET SCOUT

## I

On the side of the hill between Whitewood and Deadwood,  
At the foot of a pine stump, there lies a lone grave  
Environed with rocks and with pine trees and redwood,  
Where the wild roses bloom o'er the breast of the brave.

## II

A mantle of brushwood the greensward encloses;  
The green boughs are waving far up overhead;  
While under the sod and the flowerlets reposes  
The brave and the dead.

## III

Did I know him in life? Yes, as brother knows brother.  
I knew him and loved him, 'twas all I could give,  
My love. But the fact is we loved one another  
And either would die that the other might live.

## THE BLACK HILLS

## IV

Rough in his ways? Yes, but kind and good-hearted;  
There wasn't a flaw in the heart of Wild Bill.  
And well I remember the day that he started  
That graveyard on top of the hill.

## V

A good scout? I reckon there wasn't his equal,  
Both Frémont and Custer could vouch for that fact,  
Quick as chain lightning with rifle or pistol,  
And Custer said "Bill never backed!"

## VI

He called me his "kid." Buffalo Bill was his "boy"—  
And in fact he knew more than us both.  
And though we have shared both his sorrow and joy,  
He spoke nary an oath.

## VII

And now let me show you the good that was in him—  
And letters he wrote to his Agnes, his wife.  
Why, a look or a smile, one kind word could win him!  
Hear part of this letter—the last of his life:

## (INTERLUDE)

"Agnes Darling: If such should be that we never meet again, while firing my last shot I will gently breathe the name of my wife, my Agnes—and with a kind wish, even for my enemies, I will make the plunge and try to swim to the opposite shore. . . ."

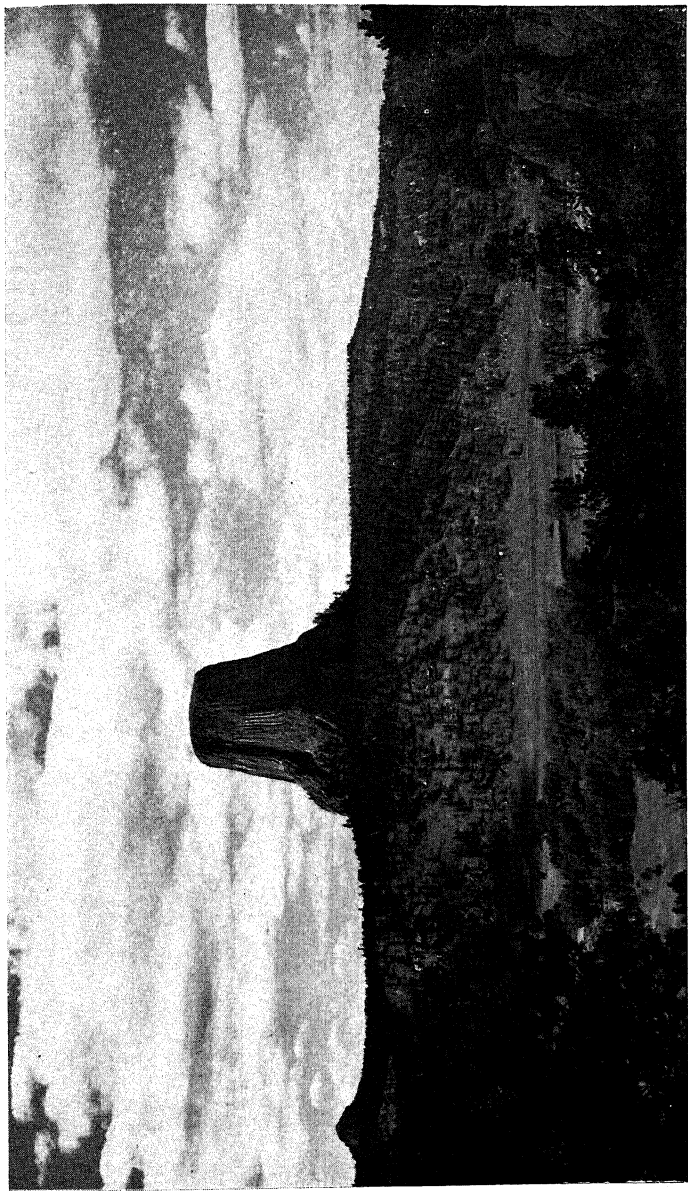
## VIII

Oh, Charity! come fling your mantle about him,  
Judge him not harshly—he sleeps 'neath the sod;  
Custer, brave Custer! was lonely without him,  
Even with God.

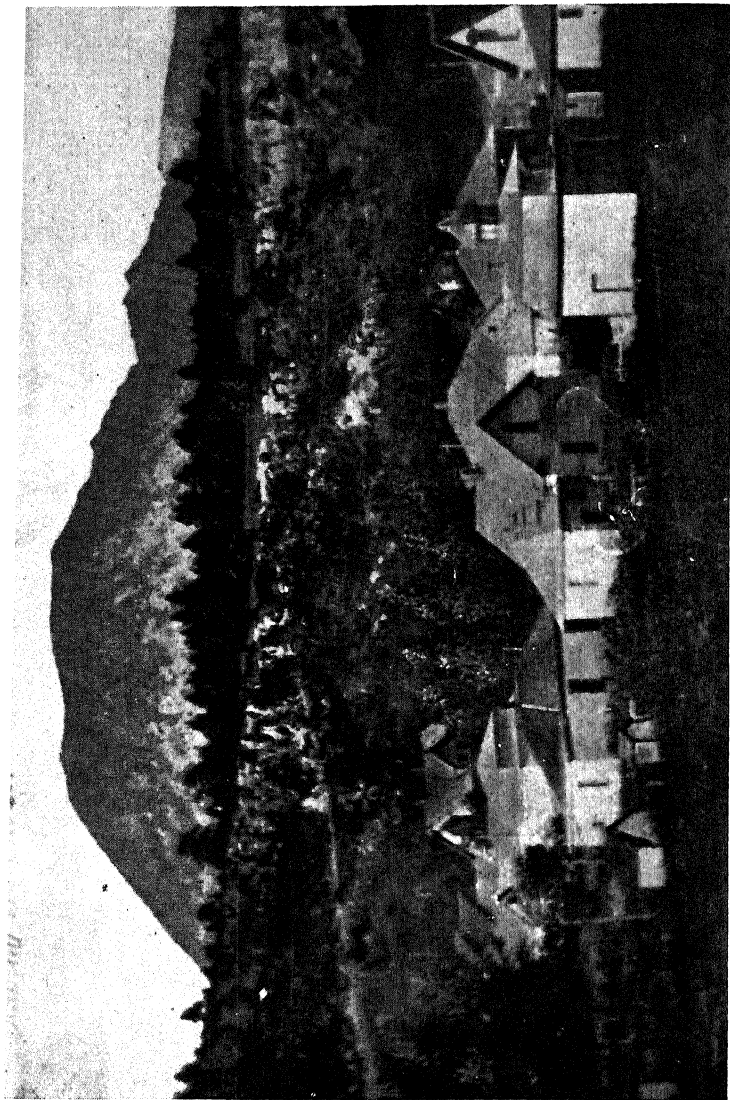
## COMMENT AND OPINION

"I never allowed a man to get the drop on me. But perhaps I may yet die with my boots on."—J. B. HICKOK in a statement to Colorado Charlie Utter, Cheyenne, 1875.

"James Butler Hickok, commonly called 'Wild Bill,' is one of the finest examples of that peculiar class known as frontiersman, hunter,



Devil's Tower, National Monument, Wyoming.



Another volcanic bubble, Bear Butte, near Sturgis, South Dakota.

ranger and Indian scout. He is now thirty-eight years old and since he was thirteen the prairie has been his home. He stands six feet one inch in his moccasins and is as handsome a specimen of a man as could be found.

"We were prepared, on hearing of 'Wild Bill's' presence in the camp, to see a person who might prove to be a coarse and illiterate bully. We were agreeably disappointed, however. He was dressed in a fancy shirt and leathern leggings. He held himself straight and had broad compact shoulders, was well chested, with small waist and well-formed muscular limbs. A fine, handsome face, free from blemish, a light mustache, a thin, pointed nose, bluish gray eyes with a calm look, a magnificent forehead, hair parted in the center of the forehead and hanging down behind the ears in wavy silken curls made up a most picturesque figure.

"He is more inclined to be sociable than otherwise; is enthusiastic in his love for his country and Illinois, his native state; and is endowed with extraordinary power and agility whose match in these respects it would be difficult to find. . . . He is a thorough child of the prairie and inured to fatigue. He has none of the swaggering gait or barbaric jargon assigned to the pioneers by the Beadle penny-a-liners. On the contrary his language is as good as that of many a one who boasts of 'College larnin'.' He seems naturally fitted to perform daring actions. He regards with greatest contempt a man that could stoop low enough to perform a mean action. He is generous even to extravagance. He formerly belonged to the 8th Missouri cavalry."—HENRY M. STANLEY, journalist and African explorer, in *My Early Travels in America*, New York, 1895

"Among the white scouts [of the Seventh Cavalry] were numbered some of the most noted of their class. The most prominent man among them was 'Wild Bill.' 'Wild Bill' was a strange character, just the one over whom the novelists might gloat. He was a plainsman in every sense of the word and yet unlike any other in his class. In person he was over six feet one in height, straight as the straightest of the warriors whose implacable foe he was; broad shoulders, well formed chest and limbs, and a face strikingly handsome. . . . Add to this figure a costume blending the immaculate neatness of the dandy with the extravagant taste and style of the frontiersman and you have Wild Bill, then as now the most famous scout on the plains.

"Whether on foot or on horseback, he was one of the most perfect types of physical manhood I ever saw. Of his courage there could be no question; it had been brought to the test on too many occasions to permit of a doubt. His skill in the use of the rifle and pistol was unerring, while his deportment was exactly the opposite of what might be expected from a man of his surroundings. It was entirely free from all bluster or bravado.

"He seldom spoke of himself unless requested to do so. His conversation, strange to say, never bordered on the vulgar or the blasphemous. His influence on the frontiersmen was unbounded. His word was law; and many are the personal quarrels and disturbances which he has checked among his comrades by his simple announcement that 'this has gone far enough,' if need be followed by the ominous warning that the persistent quarreler 'must settle it with me.'

"Wild Bill is anything but a quarrelsome man, yet nobody but himself can ennumerate the many conflicts in which he has been engaged and which have almost invariably resulted in the death of his adversary. I have a personal knowledge of at least a half dozen men he has killed, including one of my command. Others have been severely wounded. Yet he always escapes unhurt. . . .

"In all the many affairs of this sort in which Wild Bill has performed a part and which have come to my knowledge, there is not a single instance in which the verdict of twelve fair-minded men would not be pronounced in his favor. That the even tenor of his way continues to be disturbed by events of this sort may be inferred from an item that has been floating lately through the columns of the press, and which states, 'The funeral of "Jim Bludsoe" who was killed the other day by "Wild Bill," took place today.'

"It then adds: 'The funeral expenses were borne by "Wild Bill."'

"What could be more thoughtful than this? Not only to send a fellow mortal out of the world but to pay the expenses of the transport."

—GENERAL GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER in *My Life on the Plains*.

"His character was in some respects enigmatical. He fought with the McCanles gang at Rock Creek. Later he sought out Jim McCanles' widow and contributed to her support for many years and until her death."—J. W. BUEL in *Life of Wild Bill*, St. Louis, 1878.

### CALAMITY JANE

#### (Note to Chapter 21)

Despite the fact that Calamity Jane during the last years of her life supported herself, in part at least, by selling a pamphlet entitled "Calamity Jane, Written by Herself," few copies of this amazing document are still extant.

It is said to have been ghosted for her by a Mrs. Josephine Blake who also financed her disastrous appearance at the Buffalo Exposition. Virtually everything in it, including the date and place of her birth, has been disputed. Some of the incident is proved impossible by eyewitnesses and contemporaneous accounts. Nearly all of her story of scouting and

dispatch riding is merely ludicrous; yet the alleged autobiography has served as a background for her biography as presented in all seriousness by a number of fairly competent authors.

W. E. Connolley, late secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, apparently accepted the whole recital as authentic for he parallels it faithfully in his posthumous book on Wild Bill. The anonymous author of the *Montana State Guide* accepts her own statement that she was a scout for the U. S. Army, an expert horsewoman and a crack shot. Eric Thane, in *High Border Country*, puts her with Custer in 1870 and consequently gives her the honor, such as it is, of having been the first white woman in the Black Hills. Will Frackelton (*Sagebrush Dentist*) is less gullible and mentions that most of the early anecdotes about Calamity had nothing to do with her army experience. He gives a little light on her final wanderings, valuable because of its objectivity. She was selling her book when he saw her in Sheridan, Wyoming, and again in Yellowstone Park in the late nineties. She was obviously down on her luck. Just before her death in Deadwood old-timers say that she was finding few customers for her autobiography even at a dime. An autographed specimen of it today would bring a high price as a collector's item.

The copy presented herewith was found in the effects of the late Willis Sanderson of Superior, Montana. With it was a note stating that it had been given to him by Calamity Jane in person when he was running a restaurant in old Coulson Village which was on the present site of Billings.

It follows:

### *Calamity Jane*

BY

HERSELF

My maiden name was Marthy Cannary; was born in Princeton, Mo., May 1, 1852; father and mother natives of Ohio; had two brothers and three sisters, I being the oldest of the children. As a child I always had a fondness for adventure and outdoor exercise, and especial fondness for horses which I began to ride at an early age and continued to do so until I became an expert rider, being able to ride the most vicious and stubborn of horses; in fact the greater portion of my life in those early times was spent in this manner.

In 1865 we migrated by overland route to Virginia City, Mont.; took five months for the journey. While on the way the greater portion of my time was spent in hunting along with the men. In fact I was at all times along with the men when there was excitement or adventure to be had.



By the time we reached Virginia City, I was considered a remarkably good shot and a fearless rider for a girl of my age. I remember many occurrences on the journey from Missouri to Montana. Many times in crossing the mountains the trails were so bad that we had to lower wagons over the ledges by hand with ropes, for they were so rough and rugged that horses were no use.

We also had exciting times fording streams for many of the streams on our way were noted for quicksands and boggy places where, unless we were careful, we would have lost horses and all. Then we had many dangers to encounter in the way of streams swelling on account of heavy rains. On occasions of this kind the men would usually select the best places to cross streams. Myself on more than one occasion had mounted my pony and swam across the stream several times merely to amuse myself.

I had many narrow escapes from both my pony and myself being washed to certain death, but as the pioneers had plenty of courage, we overcame all obstacles and reached Virginia City in safety. Mother died at Blackfoot, Montana, 1866, where we buried her.

I left Montana in the spring of 1866 for Utah, arriving in Salt Lake City during the summer. Remained in Utah until 1867 where my father died, then went to Fort Bridger, Wyo. . . . Arrived May 1, 1868. Remained around Fort Bridger during 1868, then went to Piedmont, Wyo., with the U. P. railway.

Joined Gen. Custer as a scout at Fort Russell, Wyo., in 1870 and started for Arizona for the Indian campaign.

Up to this time I had always worn the costume of my sex. When I joined Custer I donned the uniform of a soldier. It was a bit awkward at first but I soon got to be perfectly at home in men's clothes.

Was in Arizona until the winter of 1871 and during that time had a great many adventures with the Indians, for, as a scout, I had a great many dangerous missions to perform, and while I was in many close places, always succeeded in getting away safely, for by this time I was considered the most reckless and daring rider and one of the best shots in the western country.

After that campaign I returned to Fort Lander, Wyo., and remained there until the spring of 1872, when we were ordered out to the Mussel Shell or Nursey Pursey\* Indian outbreak. In that war Gens. Custer, Miles, Terry and Crook were all engaged. This campaign lasted until the fall of 1873.

It was during this campaign that I was christened Calamity Jane.

It was on Goose Creek, Wyo., where the town of Sheridan is now located. Captain Egan was in command of the post. We were ordered

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\* Nez Perces ?

out to quell an uprising of the Indians and were out for several days and had numerous skirmishes during which six of the soldiers were killed and several severely wounded when on returning to the post, we were ambushed about a mile and a half from our destination.

When fired upon, Capt. Egan was shot. I was riding in advance, and when hearing the shot, turned in my saddle and saw the captain reeling in his saddle as though about to fall.

I turned my horse and galloped back with all haste to his side and got there in time to catch him as he was falling. I lifted him onto my horse in front of me, and succeeded in getting him safely to the fort.

Capt. Egan,\* on recovering, laughingly said:

"I name you 'Calamity Jane,' the heroine of the plains."

I have borne that name until the present time.

We were afterward ordered to Fort Custer where Custer City now stands, where we arrived in the spring of 1874. We remained at Fort Custer all summer and were ordered to Fort Russell in the fall of 1874 where we arrived until the spring of 1875. Was then ordered to the Black Hills to protect miners as that country was controlled by the Sioux Indians. The government had to send soldiers to protect the lives of miners and settlers in that sector.

Remained there until fall of 1875 and wintered at Fort Laramie. In the spring of 1876 we were ordered north with Gen. Crook to join Generals Miles, Terry and Custer at the Big Horn river. During this march I swam the Platte River at Ft. Fetterman as I was the bearer of important dispatches. I had a ninety mile ride to make, being wet and cold. I contracted a severe illness and was sent back in Gen. Crook's ambulance to Fort Fetterman where I laid in the hospital for fourteen days.

When able to ride I started for Ft. Laramie where I met William Hickok, better known as Wild Bill and we started for Deadwood where we arrived about June.†

During the month of June, I acted as a pony express rider carrying the U. S. mail between Deadwood and Custer over one of the roughest trails in the Black Hills country. Many riders before me had been held up and robbed of their packages, mail and money that they carried for that was the only means of getting mail and money between these points. It was considered the most dangerous route in the Black Hills but as my reputation as a rider and quick shot was well known I was molested very little, for the toll gatherers looked on me as a good fellow and they knew I never missed my mark.

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\* Captain Egan later said the only thing he remembered about Calamity Jane was ordering her off a military reservation for purposes of discipline.

† Unauthenticated.

I made the round trip every two days, which was considered pretty good riding in that country.

I remained around Deadwood that summer, visiting all the camps within an area of 100 miles. My friend Wild Bill remained in Deadwood during the summer with the exception of occasional visits to the camps.

On the second of August, while sitting at a gambling table in the Bella Union\* saloon in Deadwood, he was shot in the back of the head by the notorious Jack McCall, a desperado.

I was in Deadwood at the time and on hearing of the killing made my way to the scene of the shooting and found that my friend had been killed by McCall.

I at once started to look for the assassin and found him at Shurdy's butcher shop and grabbed a meat cleaver and made him throw up his hands, because through the excitement of hearing of Bill's death having left my weapons on the post of my bed. He was then taken to a log cabin and locked up, well secured as every one thought. But he got away and was afterwards caught at Fagan's ranch on Horse Creek on the old Cheyenne road and was then taken to Yankton where he was tried, sentenced and hanged.

I remained around Deadwood, locating claims and going from camp to camp until the spring of 1877 when, one morning, I saddled my horse and rode to Crook City.

I had gone about twelve miles from Deadwood at the south of White-wood creek when I met the overland mail running from Cheyenne to Deadwood . . . the horses on the run, about 200 yards from the station. Upon looking closely I saw they were pursued by Indians. As the horses stopped, I rode alongside the coach and found the driver, John Slaughter, lying face downwards in the boot of the stage, he having been shot by the Indians.

When the stage got to the station, the Indians hid in the bushes. I hurriedly removed all the baggage from the coach except the mail. I then took the driver's seat and, with all haste, drove to Deadwood carrying the six passengers and the dead driver.

I left Deadwood in the fall of 1877 and went to Bear Butte Creek with the Seventh Cavalry. During the fall and winter we built Fort Meade and the town of Sturgis.† In 1878 I left there and went to Rapid City where I put in a year prospecting.

In 1879 I went to Fort Pierre and drove teams from Rapid City to Pierre for Frank Witsche and then from Fort Pierre to Sturgis for Fred Evans. This teaming was done with oxen as they were better fitted for the work than horses owing to the rough nature of the country.

In 1881 I went to Wyoming and retired in 1882 to Miles City and

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\* It wasn't the Bella Union.

† And on the seventh day she rested.

took up a ranch on the Yellowstone raising stock and cattle—also kept a wayside inn where the weary traveler could be accommodated with food, drink or trouble if he looked for it.

Left the ranch in 1883 and went to California through the states and territories. Reached Oregon the latter part of 1883 and San Francisco in the summer of 1884. Then [left] for Texas stopping at Ft. Yuma, the hottest point in the U. S. Stopped at all points of interest until reached El Paso in the fall.

When in El Paso I met Mr. Clinton Burke, a native of Texas who I married in 1885, as I thought I had traveled through life long enough alone and thought it was about time to take a partner for the rest of my days.

We remained in Texas leading a quiet life until 1889. On Oct. 28, 1887, I became the mother of a baby girl, the very image of its father, at least that's what they said, but who had the temper of its mother.

When we left Texas, we went to Boulder, Colo., where we kept a hotel until 1893, after which we traveled through Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, then back to Montana and then to Dakota, arriving in Deadwood, Oct. 9, 1895 after an absence of seventeen years.

My arrival after an absence of so many years created quite an exciting time among my many friends of the past to such an extent that a vast number of citizens who had come to Deadwood during my absence, who had heard so much of Calamity Jane and her many adventures in former years, were anxious to see me.

Among the many whom I met were several gentlemen from Eastern cities who advised me to allow myself to be placed before the public in such a manner as to give the Eastern cities an opportunity of seeing the Woman Scout who was made so famous during her daring career in the West and Black Hills countries.

An agent of Kohl and Middleton, the celebrated museum men, came to Deadwood through the solicitation of the gentlemen I had met there. And arrangements were made to place me before the public in this manner.

My first engagement began at the Palace Museum, Minneapolis, Jan. 20, 1896.

Hoping that this little history of my life may interest all readers, I remain, as in the early days, Yours, Mrs. M. Burk.\*

#### THE LADIES

*(Note to Chapter 21)*

Calamity Jane wasn't the only lady who acquired a descriptive title in the Hills. Looking up the available records one is surprised to discover

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\* Her spelling.

that surnames were virtually unknown. But what names there were had plenty of color. Here are a few noted by one John Kimmel who had a ranch somewhere outside of Newcastle:

*Alabama Jane*, a leading character at the Gem Theater under the management of Al Swearingen. This Jane's idiosyncrasy was to take her hair down when she was drunk. She would run all over town shrieking, with her black locks flying behind her. She was, Kimmel observes, a "battling wildcat who managed to die a natural death in 1881."

*Cayuse Laura* rode into the Hills with her husband who was a stage driver. After his death she took up a ranch claim on the West slope and worked it herself. "She was considered a holy terror by the Indians."

*Deadwood Georgie* married a gambler and eloped with a bullwhacker, got snowed in and took two months to get to Ft. Pierre—the "slowest elopement on record."

*Poker Nell* was another Deadwood character reputed to have been skillful, masculine and beautiful. She would have nothing at all to do with the frail sisterhood and was generally disliked by them. She became a professional faro dealer and "presumably lived an interesting life."

*Snow Plow Bowers* was one of those hardy little women who tagged around with their husbands in bad weather. Hers was a shotgun freighter running mostly into Deadwood. She got her name through her speed in cutting through snowdrifts to get a tent over her husband when he had hurt his leg in a fall.

*Wild Horse Kate* came to Newcastle with Doc Cavas' Wild West Show. She horsewhipped a ringmaster, was tried for assault and left the show. Later she married and went with her husband to run a ranch near Sundance. "But though peaceful in the main," runs Kimmel's account, "she had not yet put her wild habits wholly away. For, when a certain cowboy borrowed money from her and refused to pay up, she resorted to a six-shooter and killed him. Again she stood trial and was cleared. Some years later her first husband died. She married a man who, this historian deposes, was a courageous soul, and she settled down to a peaceful life. Fair enough!"

*The Cryin' Squaw* was a young white woman named Barnett who had a ranch in the Bear Lodge Mountains. She got her name because of the act she would put on whenever she went to drag her husband out of a saloon. "She shot him one day without shedding a tear."

#### SUGAR COATED SAM

(Note to Chapter 23)

*The Deadwood Dick Library*, like many another literary work, is something that everybody talks about and nobody seems to have read. As children we heard about Deadwood Dick long before we ever heard about

Deadwood. And long after the Beadle publications had gone out of business, a large clientele continued to refer to the five-cent novels that succeeded them as "Deadwood Dicks." But by 1895 the sprightly central character of Mr. Edward L. Wheeler's saga was only a name suggestive of forgotten deeds.

I have wondered, but not for long, how well the people of Deadwood were acquainted with Deadwood Dick when they hung his corpse about the neck of poor old Richard Clarke. The obvious answer is, of course, that nobody knew anything about him at all—and that includes the pathetic ancient who assumed his identity.

Sentimental Deadwood thought, no doubt, that in harmless mummery it was preserving the memory of a great hero. Apparently it still thinks so, else it wouldn't be strewing flowers about the lonely cairn that marks a former hostler's resting place. Around the Chamber of Commerce you get the general idea that the original Deadwood Dick, if any, was a scout, a trail blazer, a frontiersman and a one-man vigilance committee something like the "Lone Ranger." But that isn't the way it reads here in the small print of Deadwood Dick's birth record, *The Deadwood Dick Library*, by Edward L. Wheeler, copyright 1881-1888 by Beadle & Adams, in the section designated as Volume IV, Number 47.

In this archive it is recorded that one Sugar Coated Sam, president of the Sugar Coated Mining & Milling Company, was brought to trial for his life apparently on general principles.

Miss Bessie Burt took the stand to say that the defendant was being made the victim of a blackmail plot. And then—!

"This is utter falsehood," cried the authoritative voice of the female eccentric Sure-Pop. "I am a United States Detective and the witness who brings the charges, Commodore Burt, is my aide. The man in the prisoner's box is the famous outlaw, known to many of you as—*Deadwood Dick!*"

## CHAPTER VI

### *A Strange Horror*

Had a bomb exploded in the camp it would not have created more astonishment than the sudden declaration of Sure-Pop.

"Deadwood Dick!" ejaculated Commodore Burt.

"Deadwood Dick!" cried several others. "Deadwood Dick, the dare-devil road-agent!"

"Ay, Deadwood Dick, the outlaw with a dozen aliases!" Sure-Pop replied triumphantly.

Quite a lot happens after that. The prisoner, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, is lynched. Every reader knows the mob has made a mistake.

Public sentiment turns against Bessie Burt merely because she had demanded that he be given a fair trial.

In chapter XI Joe Langdon, a stage driver, warns her of her danger:

"Miss Burt, reports reach me that you are harboring Calamity Jane, the wife of the famous outlaw, Deadwood Dick. Tell me, is this true?"

"Quite true, Mr. Langdon. Calamity Jane came to me wounded almost unto death and as I am a Christian woman I took her in and have cared for her up to the present time."

"Your humanity may work you exceeding mischief," said Langdon soberly. "Tonight an attempt will be made to lynch you both."

Bessie gasped.

"Surely they will not do this, sir."

"I fear they will, if they get you. The name of Deadwood Dick or any person who has ever been associated with him don't get much mercy at the hands of the citizens of these rough mining towns. . . ."

Bessie and Calamity escape the mob. Deadwood Dick, arising, as expected, from the lynchee's grave, flees elsewhere but you are never in any doubt about his status in the community. Toward the end of the narrative he captures a couple of gunmen who apparently had followed him from the cemetery.

"The outlaws were unmasked," Mr. Wheeler reports. "They proved to be two men who once in the early days of Deadwood had belonged to one of Dick's bands of road agents. . . . On this account Dick decided to do them no further harm. . . ."

Dick, it would appear, was the leader not of a single gang of road agents but several. It would be interesting to know if Richard Clarke, one time Whitewood section hand, was ever told about that.

#### STAGECOACHES

#### *(Note to Chapter 27)*

The first "overland" stagecoach—which is to say the first coach from the other side of the Indian country—came into Deadwood from Cheyenne on September 25, 1876, with Dave Dickey as driver. The last went out on December 29, 1890, escorted solemnly by the Knights of Pythias in full regalia. But coaches of one sort or another continued to serve parts of the West until the automobile became practical along about the time of the First World War.

Harvey Fellows was the last stage driver in Deadwood conducting one of the old Concord coaches over the Centennial Valley trail to Spearfish. And this was no sentimental survival. Because of the circuitous

route of the Burlington over the mountains and through Spearfish Canyon, the stage could still make better time than the railroad.

Fellows was old and nearly blind when he came to the end of his last trip. Brought back from retirement to take part in a "Days of '76" celebration, he was unable to drive but took his place on the box of the old coach which had been made part of a float on a motor truck.

When the parade was finished he started to dismount as he had done thousands of times, stepping from the hub to the ground. But he had forgotten that the height of the truck intervened. He never recovered.

Rates: First-class passenger fare from Cheyenne to Deadwood was \$123 a head. Competition by the Sidney Short line brought out a rate of \$45 from Omaha to Custer.

In *Yesterday and Today*, the history of the Chicago & North Western Railway system, mention is made of the effort to provide transportation for "adventurers from all parts of the world."

"Very soon," says this account, "various carriers were provided and in all cases fostered in various ways by the C. & N. W. Railway. They ran from Cheyenne, Wyo., Sidney, Neb., Sioux City, Iowa, Yankton, S. D., Pierre, S. D., and Bismarck, N. D., and enabled all classes and conditions of people to get in and out of the Hills. The route and rates of fare of one of these lines has been preserved. The passenger was carried from Chicago to Sioux City over the C. & N. W., from Sioux City to Yankton by Dakota Southern R. R., from Yankton to Ft. Pierre via Steamer, and thence via North-Western Stage Company's Concord coaches to various points in the Hills. The first class fare by this route from Chicago was \$41.45; second class \$34. The second class was for deck passage on the steamers and bull team transport from Fort Pierre to Rapid City."

It was the bull freight, of course, that made the development of the Black Hills at all possible during the first decade. The extent of its business and physical equipment can scarcely be comprehended by anybody born since the coming of the railroad.

Fred Evans, the great promoter of Hot Springs, continued to run his lines until 1887. He employed an average of 1,500 men, 3,000 oxen and 2,000 mules. Twenty to 40 yoke of oxen were used to pull a wagon, representing an investment of between \$100 and \$150 a yoke.

The chief staples hauled into the Hills were flour, sugar, bacon, beans, mining supplies, hardware, calico, chewing tobacco and whisky. This stuff cost 10 or 15 cents a pound for transportation depending on distance carried and the state of the weather.

Newspaper files of the gold-rush period show general indignation over prices in Deadwood and Rapid City: Arbuckle's coffee, \$1.00 a pound; bacon, 75 cents a pound; whisky, 25 cents a glass. In other words most of the quoted prices were about the same in 1876 as in 1946-1947 except



the whisky—and a measure of skull varnish in Deadwood in '76 meant three ounces.

Here is a commentary from the diary of George W. Ayers of Deadwood who arrived in Custer from Cheyenne on March 23, 1876:

"Freighters usually charged \$15 per 100 pounds, men and women being weighed to determine the amount they would have to pay for the privilege of riding in a covered wagon part of the time and walking the rest of the way.

"The passengers often had to help push or pull the heavy wagons up steep hills or through muddy stretches. Mail, carried by pony express, would be 20, 30, or even 60 days old when received. Pony express riders charged 50 cents per letter. Magazines came by freight.

"Freight was often delayed so that prices soared as stocks were depleted."

#### HAIR PANTS PRICES

(*Note to Chapter 27*)

The *Rapid City Journal* of December 31, 1938, printed a letter from O. C. Lapp, Seattle, recalling his days as a cow hand in the Black Hills. Lapp's comment on the price of a kit might be read with interest in front of the display window of some dude outfitter in Rapid. . . .

"About the price of a cow-waddy's outfit those days—don't think there was a fifty dollar saddle on the roundup. Those saddles and ten gallon hats came in vogue with the drugstore and rodeo cowboys. When I was riding (beginning 1887) you could buy a cracken good pair of high-heel boots at from \$4 to \$6. But I did buy one pair from Lon Ayres (that he had made for him but they were too small for him) for \$10, that the old shoemaker down on Lame Johnny creek made for Lon at a cost of \$10.

"You could buy from the Tom Sweeney Hardware or the E. Howe saddle and harness shop a cracken good Cheyenne or Vacillin tree saddle at from \$35 to \$40, and I bought Ole Davis' saddle that he had made to order after he went west from Mrs. Clark for \$25. He had only had it three seasons. As for silver mounted spurs and bridle bits, one could get a good steel curb bit with rowel on it for \$1.50 and a pair of spurs that you could scratch 'em all over with at from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per throw.

"Our California breeches cost us \$7.50 a shot while our Stetson hats could be bought either from Felix Poznansky or the L. Morris co. for five bucks—and they were not the ten gallon variety either, such as the aforesaid drugstore and dude ranch cowboys wear today."

## BURIED TREASURE

*(Note to Chapter 28)*

In a region where anybody can get rich, it is alleged, merely by digging a hole in the right place, it is not surprising that tales of reburied gold turn up with startling regularity.

Of course nobody has ever had any trace of the \$140,000 loot taken in the Canyon Springs stage holdup except for two bricks—worth about \$650—recovered from the window of a bank in Atlantic, Iowa. But that doesn't prevent the occasional circulation of maps showing its resting place on Lame Johnny Creek no great distance west of State Highway 79.

There is a story that the Metz family buried their gold before (or while) they were being massacred at the mouth of Red Canyon, south of Custer, in 1776. The yarn gained circulation because a sheepherder is said to have found a tin can with a nugget in it.

In July 1877 the Sidney treasure coach was held up four miles south of Battle Creek—so goes another rumor—and robbed of a chest now buried somewhere in the foothills of Hat Creek. We have made no effort to look for this inasmuch as the treasure coach was successfully held up only once—in the affair at Canyon Springs.

From similarly authentic sources we learn that when four miners were killed somewhere on Castle Creek by Indians, their bodies and a considerable cleanup of gold dust were left in the meadow. For a time, legend states, the bodies were marked with four crosses—presumably placed there by the Indians. But now the crosses are gone and it is going to be hard to find them.

In 1876, we are unreliably informed, "a party of New Yorkers" left the Big Horn Mountains "carrying 286 pounds of gold," not 287 pounds or 285 pounds, 4 ounces, but 286 pounds, a good round sum to carry from the Big Horn Mountains into the Black Hills. But anyway, these New Yorkers, taking the most direct route east, were attacked by Crazy Horse, "a day's ride out of Deadwood." They buried their gold "at a place where the waters run in four directions." But they were never able to find it again. Which was unfortunate, indeed.

Around Rapid City you are told of an early prospector shot by Indians who managed to crawl, while dying, "into a limestone cave." Somewhere en route he dropped a note saying that he had a cache of gold in the cave which he wanted used for the relief of old miners. Searchers have found all sorts of caves and one skeleton. But the needy old miners, if any, are still unrelieved.

About the only authentic postmortem report about a gold strike is

the Thoen stone which gives no definite information. It is highly possible, however, that somebody may one day uncover a few ounces of dust along with some human bones on the slope of Signal Mountain.

One hoard that is unlikely to see the light of day ever again, is a bucketful of gold watches cached by Lame Johnny in a gulch a few miles below Rushmore Peak. Johnny put this stuff away like a squirrel burying nuts, intending to come back. Fully realizing after his arrest that he wasn't going to see the place again he told some unnamed friend on Hat Creek. But the friend seems to have been frightfully tardy about telling anybody else about it. And now the information isn't going to do anybody any good.

Lame Johnny's fine collection of key-winding, lever-action watches, complete with chains and handsome watch charms, is now twenty feet deep under the water of Horsethief Lake.

#### RAILROADS

*(Note to Chapter 29)*

The Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad (The North Western line) reached Rapid City in 1886 and Whitewood in 1887. There the constructors debated whether to tunnel through the mountains to Deadwood or go on to Minnesela, at the junction of Belle Fourche River and Redwater Creek. In 1890 they went into Deadwood and completed a terminus three miles from Minnesela at the new town of Belle Fourche.

Meantime the Chicago, Burlington and Missouri Railroad was coming into the northern Hills along the west slope, through Edgemont, Minnekahta, Custer, Hill City, Mystic, Rochford, Englewood and Lead. It arrived in 1891.

The first railroad in the Hills, however, was neither of these. It was the Black Hills and Fort Pierre Railroad, built by the Homestake Mine as a logging road in 1881. Under the Homestake's management it ran from Lead to a point on upper Elk Creek.

This line was taken over by the Burlington which extended it through Nemo and down Stage Barn Canyon to Piedmont with a loop extending northward to the present site of Tilford where it turned a few miles west in Elk Creek Canyon. It was a remarkably scenic route and did a considerable passenger business between Piedmont and Lead while the North Western was considering its course from Whitewood. It was still operating to lumber and mining camps in the northern Hills until about the time of the First World War. The stations were Este, Nemo, Spruce, Novak, Benchmark, Apex, Roubaix, Avalon, Galena Junction (with a branch to Galena), Woodville, Englewood, Ruby Basin, Kirk, Lead.

The Deadwood Central Railroad was chartered on September 19, 1888, with a capital stock of \$1,000,000 and ran a narrow-gauge line from Lead to Deadwood by way of Pluma. This right of way was later taken over by the Burlington and electrified. A trolley car made the round trip every hour in competition with the "Slim Princess," the narrow-gauge train that climbed up the hill from the North Western's Deadwood terminal.

At the time of the First World War there was a network of spurs in the northern Hills to connect a dozen or more producing mines. The Burlington ran a thirty-one mile narrow-gauge line over the mountaintops from Deadwood to Spearfish. All of these have vanished now, including the two suburban services.

The West River lines were started in 1906, the North Western from Pierre and the Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul from Chamberlain. Both reached Rapid City in 1907.

The Belle Fourche and Aladdin Railway is another ghost line that few remember. It ran about twelve miles from the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad's terminal at Belle Fourche to the near-by Wyoming coal fields. It was pulled up about the time of the First World War. The Crouch line, which ran up Rapid Canyon thirty-six miles from Rapid City to a junction with the Burlington at Mystic, is mentioned elsewhere.

The only railroad building in the Black Hills region recently has been in the Belle Fourche neighborhood—branches to towns in the irrigation area and to newly developed Bentonite fields.

#### GEORGE BOLAND'S VISITORS

(Note to Chapter 30)

It seems to have been a pure accident when anybody in one of the Hills towns happened to find out what was going on in another. Even after the arrival of the telegraph news was slower traveling between Rapid City and Deadwood than between Deadwood and New York City. Which, undoubtedly accounts for the fact that nobody seems to have investigated the odd situation presented herewith.

George Boland, as mentioned by John A. Boland in the *Narrative of Lame Johnny*, was visited at his stage station near Buffalo Gap one afternoon in October 1878 by three men in a wagon, one of whom was wounded and dying. The two well men drove away and a few hours afterward George had to dig a grave.

The first holdup of the treasure coach out of Deadwood had occurred at Canyon Springs on September 28, 1878. Four of the robbers, one of them wounded, left the scene in a spring wagon taking with them the

stolen gold. They were trailed over the Hills to the prairies below Rapid City. (See Chapter 28.) While Doug Goodale brought two ingots to Atlantic, Iowa, it seems likely that the bulk of the gold—about 400 pounds—remained with the men in the wagon. And it seems also likely that if the authorities had bothered to listen to George's report about the corpse left at his door they might have followed some wagon tracks from Horsehead and recovered something of \$140,000 which is still missing.

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